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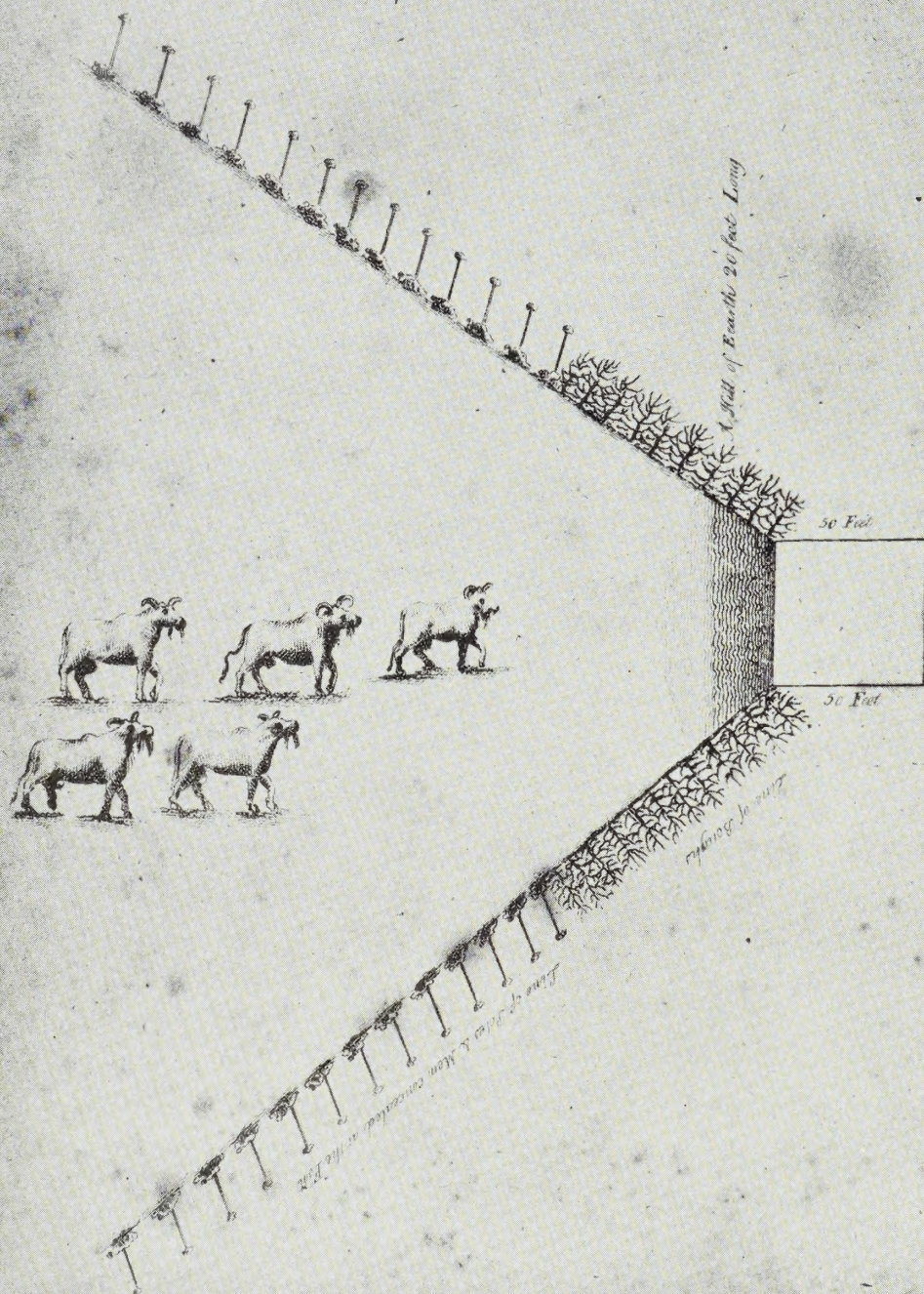
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THE
PRESENT STATE
OF
HUDSON'S BAY

Plan of a Buffalo Pound.



THE
PRESENT STATE
OF
HUDSON'S BAY

CONTAINING A FULL DESCRIPTION OF
THAT SETTLEMENT, AND THE ADJACENT COUNTRY;
AND LIKEWISE OF

THE FUR TRADE

WITH HINTS FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT, &c. &c.
BY EDWARD UMFREVILLE

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

W. STEWART WALLACE

LIBRARIAN EMERITUS, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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INTRODUCTION

THE BOOK here reprinted, for the first time since it was published in 1790, is one of the rarest of the documents relating to the history of the fur-trade in British North America toward the end of the eighteenth century. When it appears in the book-auction rooms, it commands high prices; and it is to be found in only a limited number of libraries in Canada, or indeed elsewhere. It would seem that the time has come when a new edition, with an historical introduction and an index, and with such annotations as appear to be necessary or desirable, may not be unwelcome.

It is not suggested that the book is one of the most important items in the literature of the Canadian fur-trade. As a description of the fur-trade in Hudson Bay, it is not so full as Joseph Robson's *Account of Six Years' Residence in Hudson's-Bay* (London, 1752) or Henry Ellis's *A voyage to Hudson's Bay* (London, 1748); and, indeed, the author expressly says that he attempts only "to lay before the public such particulars as the above authors had not an opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of." It must be admitted, moreover, that the author fails to tell us a great deal that we should like to know. If, for instance, he had elaborated his account of his four years' service with the North West Company, he might have thrown a flood of light on a period in the history of the Canadian fur-trade that is still to some extent obscure. He is much more concerned in holding the Hudson's Bay Company up to scorn than he is in giving us a full and veracious account of his experiences in North America.

Yet, whatever the book's omissions, it contains a good deal of information to be found nowhere else. It gives us the first full account of one or two of the western Indian tribes; it gives the

first description of the finding of coal in the North West; it gives a clear and impartial picture of the methods of the fur-trade at the end of the eighteenth century; and it contains the fullest account we have, from the English point of view, of the capture of Fort Prince of Wales and York Factory by Admiral La Pérouse in 1782. Like David Thompson, Edward Umfreville had the advantage of having been a servant of both the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company; and this gives his book an especial value for anyone who wishes to study the story of the struggle for supremacy between these two organizations.

About Edward Umfreville, we do not know a great deal more than he tells us between the covers of his book. He entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company as a "writer" in 1771; and one may deduce from this that he was probably born shortly after the middle of the eighteenth century, since most of the apprentices recruited by the Hudson's Bay Company at this time were still in their 'teens. He remained in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company for eleven years, the last eight of which were spent, he says, at York Factory. When York Factory was taken by Admiral La Pérouse in 1782, he was taken prisoner, and carried to France, but on his release and his return to England he had some disagreement with the Hudson's Bay Company in regard to salary, and he quitted the Company's service. He then took ship for Canada; and on reaching Montreal he entered the service of the North West Company as a clerk. He remained with the North West Company only four years; and then, for some reason he does not fully explain, he returned to England by way of New York in 1788. Two years later he published *The Present State of Hudson's Bay* in London. That is all the information one can glean from the book itself.

The late Professor A. S. Morton, in his *History of the Canadian West* (Toronto, 1939), offers the following supplementary information, evidently derived from his researches in

Hudson's Bay House in London. He describes Umfreville as "formerly accountant for the Hudson's Bay Company at Severn Fort," and adds:

A man of considerable talent, he was made second at Severn Fort immediately on his engagement in 1771. Andrew Graham, his Chief, reported him as a "pretty accountant" and likely to do well if properly handled. Though a comparative new-comer in 1773, he drew up an elaborate "Proposal for the better regulation of the intended expedition Inland" to establish a post. Samuel Hearne even visited him at Severn to consult him before leading his party to Cumberland House. In 1776 he became second at York Fort. Possibly because he regarded this promotion as much too slow, he left the Company's service in 1779.

One hardly knows how much credence to place in these statements, for one of them is undoubtedly wrong. Edward Umfreville left the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, not in 1779, but in 1782, when he was taken prisoner by the French. It would appear that Professor Morton had not even read Umfreville's book. But it is possible that the rest of the facts are correct, though none of them appears in the memorandum regarding Edward Umfreville which the Archivist of the Hudson's Bay Company, Miss Johnson, has kindly placed at my disposal.

There is no doubt that Edward Umfreville came of a distinguished lineage. The Umfreville family goes back to Robert de Umfreville ("Robert with the Beard"), who came to England with William the Conqueror. The Umfrevilles became a baronial family in the north of England, and played a prominent part in the wars with Scotland. During the Wars of the Roses, however, the family seems to have fallen on evil days. Some of the members of the family were compelled to flee to foreign countries, and others to change their names and arms to avoid prosecution. The barony of Umfreville lapsed; and when Edward Umfreville (1638-1691), barrister-at-law, sought to establish his claims to the barony, his claim was disallowed,

because of the great lapse of time. (It may be noted here that Edward was a constantly recurring name in the Umfreville family.) There was published in London in 1854, a genealogy of the Umfreville family entitled *The Umfrevilles: Their Ancestors and Descendants*; but unfortunately our Edward Umfreville does not appear in this genealogy.

In my search for information about the author of *The Present State of Hudson's Bay*, I came across the name of a Mrs. Evelyn Blackett, of Corbridge, Northumberland, who was interested in the Umfreville genealogy; and through her I got in touch with Colonel Harry Umfreville, who would appear to be a grand-nephew of Edward Umfreville, the author of the book here reprinted. Colonel Umfreville, who is a very old man, greatly handicapped by war injuries, very kindly answered my enquiries. He wrote to me that his father had told him that "Edward Umfreville was uncle to his father, and sprang from the Colchester elder branch of the family." "I have an idea," he added, "that he was buried at Great Missenden, Berks—but it's only an idea;" and he tells me that he remembers when a boy reading Edward Umfreville's book in his father's library at Ingress Abbey. Unfortunately, Colonel Umfreville's own papers were burned in Ireland during the Black-and-Tan troubles; and his niece, who has the family Bible (which I thought might contain the dates of Edward Umfreville's birth and death), assures me that she can provide "no useful information" about Edward Umfreville from her records. For the present, therefore, I must confess myself defeated in my attempt to learn more about Edward Umfreville's place in the Umfreville genealogy than Colonel Harry Umfreville has told me.

When Edward Umfreville joined the North West Company, he was first employed in 1784 in exploring a route from Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg, as an alternative to that which had hitherto been followed from Grand Portage, which was deemed

after 1783 to lie in United States territory. His journal of this exploratory journey has survived, and is now in the Library of McGill University. It has been published by R. Douglas, with an introduction and notes, in a pamphlet entitled *Nipigon to Winnipeg: A Canoe Voyage Through Western Ontario by Edward Umfreville in 1784* (Ottawa, 1929). This journey was a remarkable performance for a newcomer to the region, but it had little practical importance, since the North West Company was able to use Grand Portage as its western headquarters for another seventeen years, and when it had to leave Grand Portage it chose the route from Fort William to Lake Winnipeg as its route to the West. Umfreville's journal, moreover, throws little light on himself, and is mainly important from the standpoint of geography.

It remains only to note a few details which are contained in the extracts from the records of the Hudson's Bay Company, which Miss Johnson, the Archivist of the Company, has kindly sent me, and which I am able to quote by the permission of the Governor and Committee of the Company.

The first item of importance is the fact that when Edward Umfreville was taken prisoner by the French on August 24, 1782, his wages as a servant of the Hudson's Bay Company ceased; and the balance of his account, amounting only to £24 14s. 2d., was paid to him on February 27, 1783, apparently after he had returned from France. That a servant of "the Great Company" should have had his pay stopped when he was taken prisoner by a hostile power would seem to have been a harsh proceeding, and probably explains his leaving the service of the Company in 1783, as well as his hostility toward the Company.

Next, a number of extracts were sent me from the journals of servants of the Hudson's Bay Company who had met Umfreville, or heard of him, when he was in the western country in the service of the Nor' Westers. For two years Umfreville was in

charge of a post far up the Saskatchewan, about fifty miles above Pine Fort; and while most of the references to him have little significance, there is one passage in the journal of John Kipling, the master of Gloucester House, under date of August 3, 1786, which deserves quotation. Says John Kipling:

I learn also that Mr. Umfreville is in the fire Country and that he has made 100 bundles of Beaver this year and is master of seven large Canoes, he stays in the country, and sends down his Indent and receives his Goods in the Fall from the Grand Portage, the Indians has seen 300 Tents about his house at one time, this may be exaggerated but it is certain the Indians are very numerous in the Fire Country notwithstanding the Small Pox is still committing a devastation among them Inland above Churchill.

From this it would appear that Edward Umfreville was not a failure as a clerk of the North West Company in the *pays d'en haut*.

Lastly, there is a letter from William Tomison, a well-known servant of the Hudson's Bay Company, which throws light on Edward Umfreville's decision to leave the service of the North West Company. Tomison wrote, under date of July 20, 1788, to the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company as follows:

Edward Umfreville, formerly in your Honors service, informed me he was tired of the Canadian masters, and that he intended to return to England, and apply to the Honorable Board for employ—and in my opinion would be a fitt Person for Inland service, being hardy and durable, strictly sober, and has a thurrow knowledge how business is carried on by the traders of Canada, I shall not coment further on this head but leave it to your Honors consideration.

Edward Umfreville returned to England by way of New York at the end of 1788; and on January 23, 1889, as appears from the Agenda Book of the Governor and Company of the Hudson's Bay Company, he addressed a letter to the Committee which was

read on February 11. Later, a second letter from him was read on April 22. Unfortunately, neither of these letters has been found in the Hudson's Bay Archives. But on May 27, 1889, the Governor and Committee wrote to William Tomison to say that "Mr. Edward Umfreville applied to Us as you mention'd but did not agree to our Terms." A year later, Umfreville's book was published in London, with its severe strictures on the Hudson's Bay Company; and there the story ends. It would appear that, after the publication of his book, he went "abroad," but where or when is as yet unknown. Nor do we yet know what he did during the later years of his life, or when he died.

To The
MERCHANTS, TRADERS
and
MANUFACTURERS
of
GREAT BRITAIN

ABOUT the year 1749, an effort was made by the late Arthur Dobbs, Esq.,¹ and several other patriotic gentlemen, to lay open the trade to Hudson's Bay, so that the people of these kingdoms at large might partake of it. Application was accordingly made to the House of Commons; and during the investigation of the business, many petitions were presented to the House from the trading part of the nation, praying that the exclusive right, held by charter, by the Company, might be annihilated. The attempt, however, was not crowned with the success it deserved. The interest of the Company unfortunately prevailed, and they have ever since remained in quiet possession of their extensive territories, to the great injury of this country, its trade and manufactures.

To make good this assertion, I humbly submit the following sheets to the public; and shall esteem myself happy, if my endeavours to promote the general good, by pointing out an avenue to national advantage, which has too long been engrossed by an injurious monopoly, shall procure for me their patronage, and be the means of remedying the evils I have thus made known.

EDWARD UMFREVILLE

LONDON,
June 17th, 1789

¹For an account of the life of Arthur Dobbs, and of his attack on the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company, see the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

PREFATORY ADVERTISEMENT

IN THE YEAR 1771, I entered into the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, in the capacity of writer, at the Salary of fifteen pounds a year; and continued in that employ eleven years. But two of their principal settlements being taken by the French in 1782, when I was made prisoner, and, upon their restoration to the Company, some disagreement arising in point of salary, I quitted their service.

Being thus disengaged, in April 1783, I made a voyage to Quebec, with a view of acquiring a knowledge of the manner in which the Fur trade was carried on from that quarter; and here I remained for four years; during which time I made the state of the country, and the trade of it, my peculiar study.

By so long a residence in that part of the world, I flatter myself I am, in a great measure, acquainted with every interesting particular relative to it; and shall lay them before the public with that truth and impartiality which ought to guide the pen of every person who attempts to inform.

Of all the authors who have wrote on this extensive country, few have given a just and disinterested account of it. Some seem to be actuated by prejudice, whilst others, either through want of good information, or a proper knowledge of the subject, have led their readers into error, by misrepresentation. Among the best writers, we must rank Ellis and Robson; the former as a philosopher, and ingenious reasoner; the latter as a candid, true, and impartial writer, and who, by having resided in the country, obtained a fund of knowledge of his subject which enabled him to inform with confidence. For my part, I shall only attempt to lay before the public such particulars as the above authors had not an opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of, and

this I shall do in a plain unadorned manner, humbly trusting that it will be read with candour, and animadverted on with good nature.

The geographical part of my subject I shall touch very lightly on, as the extent of the country and its boundaries are sufficiently known. My intention is to exhibit to the world the value of the settlements under consideration, and how far they are capable of improvement; pointing out at the same time, the destructive effects of a baneful monopoly, which has subsisted ever since the year 1670.

It is a matter of reproach to the Hudson's Bay Company, and they have never been able to wipe off those severe censures and accusations, which all the writers on this country have so justly fixed on them, upon account of it, that they do not augment and make a greater national advantage of their trade, as it is capable of so much improvement. At a time when the defection of our American colonies, has put a stop to the consumption of so considerable a part of our manufactures, is it not somewhat extraordinary that no person has yet represented the benefits which would accrue to this country, from exploring and examining the countries about Hudson's Bay? The laying open the trade to the industrious adventurers of this nation, would be an act worthy a patriotic administration; as it would be the means of enriching the commerical interests of the kingdom, and giving bread to many who are now pining in distress, particularly to that useful part of the community, who defend our country from insult, and our property from depredation, and who encounter with fortitude every species of danger for the public good; I mean the British Seamen, numbers of whom we see daily pining in distress for want of employment.

The Hudson's Bay Company employ annually two ships and a sloop, to take out sundry articles of merchandize, and bring home their peltries. The burthen together of these three vessels falls short of six hundred tons, having on board about seventy-

five men, who together with about two hundred and forty persons residing in the country, make the whole number of men in their employ to amount to 315. What an insignificant consideration! What a pitiful service, to be in the hands of a few individuals, by whom others are excluded, that would long since have rendered this part of the globe a valuable gem in the British empire;—but such is the effect of exclusive monopolies; which, when not established on a beneficial foundation, are the bane of national affluence.

Though the extent of the country from North to South is pretty well known, yet to the Westward we are not so well informed. I have myself travelled as far as 120 degrees of Longitude, from the meridian of London, through many different nations of Indians, and have always found them friendly, and ready to receive our commodities with avidity.

In speaking of the inland country too much cannot be said in commendation of it. Every species of food necessary for the support of man, is to be procured in the greatest plenty. The climate is much milder than on the Sea coast, and nothing seems to be wanting to the convenience and accommodation of its inhabitants. On the Sea coast, which the Hudson's Bay Company solely possess, though nature has been less kind, yet the country is not half so bad as it has been represented; the climate, though cold, is extremely healthful, and our countrymen usually enjoy a remarkable good state of health, during their residence there. I can for my own part aver, that I resided there eleven years without knowing the least ailment. If a stranger was to visit these parts, he would be induced to think, by the debilitated state of the natives, that he was in a country uncommonly unfavourable to the human species: but the use of spirituous liquors, and not the climate, is the cause of this misfortune: they drink to such excess, that it is rather more surprizing any should be left alive to tell the tale, than that they should be found emaciated, decrepid, and slothful. It is a melancholly reflection that the

poor devoted Indians are by this means considerably diminished in number, their minds are debased, their spirits dejected, their bodies enervated, and they are thereby rendered unfit to support their families, at a time of life when the tender age of their offspring stands in most need of support.

I have given an account of the country and its inhabitants on the Sea coast, distinct from the inland territories, not only on account of my having resided there first, but likewise, as the climate, soil, and productions are so different. In giving a description of the climate on the Sea coast, I have introduced a journal of an accident which befel three unfortunate men, on their duty at York fort, which will in some measure exemplify the severity of the weather in that country during the winter season. A gentleman who resided there in the capacity of Surgeon, gathered the account from the survivor, at different times, and in consequence of it, made many useful experiments at York, and Albany Forts, which proved highly acceptable to the learned and ingenious.

To give a full and comprehensive account of Hudson's Bay, particularly the natural history thereof, describing the animal creation, and the feathered tribes, which are here in great abundance, would require more time than I can possibly spare, was I capable of the undertaking. Being under the necessity of going abroad², I have been obliged to confine myself to the useful part of the subject; in doing which I have advanced nothing but what I know to be true, either from my own experience, or the narration of some intelligent person whose veracity I can depend upon.

²There is a tradition in the Umfreville family that, after writing this book, Edward Umfreville accompanied Captain George Vancouver on his voyage around the world. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to verify this tradition, since there is no mention of Umfreville in Vancouver's copious journals, nor does his name appear in the muster-roll of Vancouver's ships printed as an appendix to E. S. Meany, *Vancouver's Discovery of Puget Sound* (New York, 1907).

A BRIEF ACCOUNT

*Of the CLIMATE, SOIL, &c. of the Country on the Coasts of
HUDSON'S BAY, &c.*

YORK FORT, where I resided eight years, lies in the lat. of 57 deg. 2 min. N. long. 93 deg. W. from London, as determined by Mr. Philip Turner³, a Gentleman employed by the Company to make astronomical observations within the limits of Hudson's Bay. The air is very salubrious and healthy, especially during the intense cold in the winter months; and in the summer, though we find it much hotter than in England, yet Europeans in general enjoy a state of health, unknown to the inhabitants of more temperate climes. The atmosphere is clearest and most serene in the coldest weather, and the most piercing cold is felt at sun rising. A good Fahrenheit's Thermometer frequently stood at 50 degrees below the cypher in the month of January; whereas in summer, the mercury would very frequently ascend to 90 deg. above the cypher, making a difference of 140 degrees between the extremities of heat and cold. From November to the Vernal Equinox, British, and even French spirits, rum, and the like, will freeze to the consistence of honey. When exposed without doors, in the space of four hours, English brandy, contained in casks of 110 gallons each, will be often found too thick to run through a large brass cock. We have cellars that are eight or ten feet deep, under the guard-rooms where the people live, and where there is a daily and almost perpetual fire; yet even in this repository, I have seen the London porter so frozen, that only a few gallons could be got out of a whole hogshead; the remainder has been converted to ice several inches thick, which, when thawed, had

³See the "Introduction" to J. B. Tyrrell (ed.), *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1934), pp. 60-94.

not the least strength remaining. I have seen a cask of water put into the open air, and in 48 hours it has burst the cask. In an hour's time, the air condenses so thick on the windows, that it is impossible to discern an object on the other side; and it likewise adheres in large quantities to the wainscoting on the inside, as well as to the ceiling of the rooms. The frost is never out of the ground; even in summer it is thawed but about four feet below the surface; and in the thick woods, the warmth of the atmosphere gets no lower than two feet. The intenseness of the cold is beyond expression, and its effects are frequently productive of the most tragical events. The poor natives take every precaution to guard against its consequences; but notwithstanding their utmost care, they frequently fall a prey to its severity. Unhappy, indeed, is the fate of those creatures, who meet with this kind of death! After enduring great torment for a considerable time, the cold at length seizes the vitals, when the unfortunate person soon expires. Women have been found frozen to death, with a young infant, likewise frozen, clasping its arms round the mother's neck; others have been found dead, and the babe still alive.

The first year I wintered in Hudson's Bay, afforded an opportunity of describing the melancholy effects of the cold in the persons of three of our Factory men, whose names were John Farrant, James Tomson, and James Ross. The following account was gathered at times from the latter, who survived his unfortunate companions.

On Monday, January the 6th, 1772, these three men set out in the morning in order to hunt partridges, and to collect fresh provisions for the Factory, as is the custom of the country. They were to stay three weeks; at the conclusion of which time they were to return with what they had procured. In the early part of their journey they had a river to cross, about three miles over, which was not compleatly frozen at the time they reached it. Near this river, they slept the first night, intending to cross it the next morning.

Tuesday the 7th. About eight or nine o'clock in the morning they proceeded to cross the river, but they had not walked far on the ice before they perceived the smoke of open water below them, and that they went very fast down the river; which convinced them that they were adrift. This they found to be the case, and that the ice they were on was a large smooth field. They had two dogs with sleds with them, and the ebb tide carried them out to sea.

Wednesday the 8th. The tide of flood brought them into the same river, but not so high as the place from whence they had been first carried. The weather hitherto had been very mild, and it had snowed a little during the night. In their baggage was some cake they had baked the day before they left the fort, and a bottle with near a quart of gin; of this they took a little now and then.

Thursday the 9th. The weather still continued remarkably mild and clear. They were again driven up the river with the flood, but not so high as yesterday, as the tides were falling off. As the piece of ice they were upon did not, during its thus driving up and down the river, come near the shore, they were obliged to continue on it, and were driven out again with the ebb. The cake and gin was not yet expended, and they slept together in a leathern tent upon the ice.

Friday the 10th. The weather mild as before, with small breezes of wind from the S.E. quarter. A little snow fell in the night. The flood brought them again into the river, and this day they exerted themselves very much to gain the shore. In hopes of doing this Ross took his gun, powder and shot, blanket, and a little bag containing materials for kindling a fire; Farrant took only a beaver coat. Tomson was so anxious to gain the shore that he would stay for nothing. One of the dogs accompanied them, the other stayed with the sleds. After wandering about over the ice with the greatest anxiety for the major part of the

day, they found their utmost endeavours ineffectual; they therefore turned about to go to their sleds; but, to add to their misfortunes, they saw the sleds pass them on another piece of ice, and the dogs eating and tearing the tent, &c. without their being able to come at them. Their little stock of cake was expended this day. The ebb tide now carried them far out into the bay, so that they lost sight of the land, and wild geese and other sea fowls hovered over them in great numbers. Ross and Tomson lay under the blanket, and Farrant used the beaver coat.

Saturday the 11th. The weather, though colder than any of the preceding days, was yet very moderate for this frigid time of the year. The wind S.W., a moderate frost, the night overcast, but the day clear. The unhappy men had seen land to eastward, and again to the northward. When the flood made, they drew nearer to the land, and the ice closing about high water, afforded them hopes of once more getting on shore; but the attempt did not succeed. John Farrant this day had the misfortune to fall into the water, in stepping from one piece of ice to another; he was nearly carried under, before his miserable companions could drag him out. Ross having a clean shirt in his bag, they put it upon Farrant, and belted the beaver coat about him: afterwards, being nearly spent, he lay down, while Ross and Tomson gathered pieces of shelving ice, which they placed round him, as a barricade against the weather. They had a piece of sugar left, and half of it was all they subsisted on that day.

Sunday the 12th. Though it was very warm all the day, yet it was very disagreeable, as it blew very hard from the N.E. and much snow fell, which caused it to drift much during both the day and night. The piece of ice they were upon had grounded before day-break; and when the flood made, the water began to come upon it, so that they were obliged to call upon Farrant to rise; but death had freed the poor man from his troubles. Ross and Tomson continued on or near the same piece until the water had fallen away. While they sat weeping by the corps, a seal

came upon the ice; it did not meddle with the body, but looked very stedfastly on them; Tomson desired Ross to shoot it, but he refused, saying, "I myself may soon be dead." They afterwards went from piece to piece, but the weather being thick, they knew not what course to take. The sugar which remained was their food this day, and now their whole stock was expended.

Monday the 13th. A stiff gale of wind still continued from N. to N.N.W. with thick drifting weather; the morning was mild, but as night approached it grew very sharp and cold. Tomson and Ross walked again amongst the rough ice. The hands of the former were swelled to such a size, that even with the assistance of his comrade, he could not force them into his mittens; his face was also much tumified, and he became delirious; for on Ross telling him, that in two days they would reach the Factory, he answered, what ———, naming a village in the Orkneys, to which he belonged. The flood confined them to the same piece of ice, and here poor Tomson died, just as the moon sunk below the horizon.

Tuesday the 14th. The gale was quite abated, but the cold increased, and though very rimy, yet the sun shone early in the morning. The water flowed upon the ice that Ross remained on, and soon after it drove a large piece over Tomson's body, upon which Ross with difficulty got. The ebb running out, and the sun becoming visible, he directed his course by it, and after walking all the day over the rough ice, he reached the shore at the back of the Factory Island, where a path is cut strait, from high water mark, to the Factory. The unfortunate man imagining himself on the eastern shore, mistook this opening for some river or creek on that coast, so walked up till he came to a place which he remembered. Here he found his mistake, and returning back immediately, struck into a right path. He now broke down some sticks, and endeavoured to kindle a fire, but without effect. In this attempt he froze his fingers; he had benumbed them before in exchanging mittens and assisting Tomson: his feet were

likewise benumbed before he reached the shore. This night he lay on a few sticks, he had broken down for that purpose.

Wednesday the 15th. The weather this day was very moderate. He set out for the Factory, but his extreme weakness made him fall several times, which filled his mittens with snow, and froze his fingers solid. Though the distance was no more than four miles at farthest, it was seven o'clock in the evening when he arrived at the gates, where he fired his gun off to make himself heard. The extremity of his nose was frozen, but he was perfectly sensible on his arrival. One of the dogs came home with him, having staid by him all the time.

The packet for Churchill went from the Factory but the day before; had the factorymen but followed the track of these natives, all then would have been well; but the decrees of Providence are unsearchable. The other dog was slightly wounded by a setting gun on the eastern shore. Poor Tomson declared the day before his death, that he could have lived much longer had he had provisions to eat.

The unfortunate survivor was obliged to suffer amputation on most of his fingers and toes, and his nose was much mutilated. But Mr. Hutchins⁴, who was then surgeon at York Fort, effected a fine cure by preserving him; and the man now lives comfortably in Orkney, the place of his nativity. On hearing of his misfortune, a subscription was set on foot for his support at every place in the Company's settlements. The people liberally contributed according to their several abilities; and the Company, actuated by the laudable example set by their servants, allowed him an annuity of 20 l. for life.

Before I leave the subject of this unfortunate man, I cannot help remarking, that his ingratitude was conspicuous to a great degree; notwithstanding his mates in the Factory, chiefly his poor

⁴Thomas Hutchins. A sketch of his life will be found in J. B. Tyrrell (ed.), *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1934), p. 263, n. 1.

countrymen, affected by his misfortunes, had so liberally contributed towards his support, he had not the sensibility to thank any one of them for their humanity, though the greatest part of his benefactors had no more than 6 l. a year.

In the coldest weather the atmosphere is the most serene. Throughout the day the air is generally filled with icy particles, which are small beyond conception; these are driven about in the direction of the wind, and adhere to every thing which happens to be in the way of their progress. In the evening the stars begin to shine with refulgent lustre; and the contemplative mind is struck with reverence and awe, to see the Aurora Borealis darting with inconceivable velocity to all parts of the heavens. Very few winter nights pass in Hudson's Bay, without this phænomenon making its appearance; sometimes the irradiations are seen of a very bright red, at other times of a pale milky colour, undulating with every beauty it is possible to conceive or describe.

In the winter season, it frequently happens that the air is so full of watery vapours, that the sun will be obscured for several weeks together. This is occasioned by the rime, which ascends from the open sea water, and being condensed by the cold, is driven by the wind to a considerable distance. I have seen the trees, &c. fifty miles off to leeward, covered over with it.

During the cold serene weather in the winter, innumerable stars shine forth with inconceivable brilliancy; and, added to the beautiful appearance of the moon, make a most reverential and splendid appearance; Parhelia likewise become visible, which is a sure indication of intense cold; and Paraselenes or mock moons appear, when the vapours arising from open water become condensed by the frost.

The soil at Churchill Fort, which lies in lat. 59 deg. 00 min. is generally rocky near the sea coasts, very dry, and bare of vegetables. There are no woods within seven miles of the shore, and consequently, the Factory is much exposed to the inclemency of

the weather, especially in the winter season. The woods here are considerably smaller than at York Fort; the trees of which they consist are junipers, pines, poplars, and willows, but so insignificantly small, that it is with some difficulty the winter's fire-wood is procured for the Factory; and the farther the traveller proceeds to the Northward, the barer he will find the earth of every kind of vegetable. The inhabitants likewise become fewer; till at length not the least herb is to be seen, nor any trace of human steps observed, in the frigid waste. At Churchill the winters are very long, and the cold intensely severe. About the latter end of October, the shortening of the days, the coldness of the weather, and other indications, proclaim the proximity of winter; and from that time to the middle of May, this part of the world is buried in frost and snow. During this period, the utmost precaution is frequently ineffectual to repel the severity of the season. Many kinds of birds and animals become white; and several persons have unfortunately lost their lives in travelling over these inhospitable regions. Notwithstanding all this, when the genial rays of the sun begin to extend to these parts of the globe, vegetation is exceedingly quick. The trees shoot up with surprising celerity, and the Factory people are soon able to gather the produce of a little garden stuff, put into the ground about the middle of June.

Much the same may be said of the climate of York Fort, excepting that difference to be expected from a more southerly situation. The sun rises on the shortest day at 8h. 48m. 12sec. Very little can be said in commendation of the soil at the Company's northerly settlements. It is of so loose and clayey a nature, that the banks of the river are continually falling down through inundations and deluges; and it is very unfit for agriculture, even if the climate would admit of it. A tolerable quantity of cresses, radishes, lettuces, and cabbages, may however, be procured, with proper cultivation; and, in a favourable season, even pease and

beans; but these so seldom come to any perfection, that they are esteemed a kind of luxury.

The face of the country is low and marshy, and at a little distance off, seems to present to the eye a fine prospect of tall pines and junipers; but upon a nearer approach you find yourself most egregiously deceived. The pine trees, which are of different kinds, are but small; near the sea-coasts they generally run knotty, and are unfit to be used in the structure of good buildings. The same may be said of the juniper trees, growing in the same situation.

But on leaving the marshy ground, and retiring inland to the southward, the trees are of a more stately growth; and about Moose and Albany Forts, they are found of all diameters. Here the climate is much more temperate than at York Fort and Churchill Settlement. Potatoes, turnips, and almost every species of kitchen garden stuff, are reared with facility; and no doubt corn might be cultivated, if the lords of the soil had patriotism enough to make this extensive country of any service to Great-Britain. But it has been an invariable maxim with them for many years past, to damp every laudable endeavour in their servants, that might tend to make these countries generally beneficial to the Mother Country. This conduct will appear very extraordinary to those, who are unacquainted with the self-interested views of the Company. They imagine, that if it was known to the nation, that the lands they possess were capable of cultivation, it might induce individuals to enquire into their right to an exclusive charter; it is therefore their business to represent it in the worst light possible, to discourage an inquiry, which would shake the foundation of their beloved monopoly.

But to return.—Throughout the woods to the southward the ground is covered with a very thick moss, among which grow various kinds of small shrubs, bearing fruit, such as gooseberries, currants, strawberries, raspberries, cranberries, with many others too tedious to mention. A herb, which the natives call *Wee suc*

THE
PRESENT STATE
OF
HUDSON'S BAY.

CONTAINING A FULL DESCRIPTION OF
THAT SETTLEMENT, AND THE ADJACENT COUNTRY;
AND LIKEWISE OF
THE FUR TRADE,
WITH HINTS FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT, &c. &c.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS MADE IN THE INLAND
PARTS, DURING A RESIDENCE OF NEAR FOUR YEARS;
A SPECIMEN OF FIVE INDIAN LANGUAGES; AND A
JOURNAL OF A JOURNEY FROM MONTREAL TO NEW-
YORK.

BY EDWARD UMFREVILLE;
ELEVEN YEARS IN THE SERVICE OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COM-
PANY, AND FOUR YEARS IN THE CANADA
FUR TRADE.

L O N D O N:

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*a pucka*⁵, grows very plentifully in all parts of the country. The Indians make use of it by way of medicine; it makes a very agreeable tea, and is much used here both by Europeans and natives, not only for its pleasant flavour, but for its salutary effects. Its virtues are many; it is an aromatic, very serviceable in rheumatic cases, strengthens the stomach, relieves the head, and also promotes perspiration. Outwardly, it is applied to gangrenes, contusions, and excoriations; in the latter case the powder is made use of. Another herb of much utility to the natives grows likewise here; this they call *Jack ash a puck*. They mix it with their tobacco to reduce its strength.

⁵The reference would appear to be to Labrador Tea (*Ledum groenlandicum* Ceder).

The Manners, Customs, &c. of the Indians.

Having given a brief account of the climate, soil, &c. of the country, it will not be unseasonable to say something of the people who inhabit it. The Hudson's Bay Indians were originally tall, properly proportioned, strongly made, and of as manly an appearance as any people whatever. This, however, was before their commerce with Europeans had enervated and debased their minds and bodies, by introducing spirituous liquors among them, and habituating them to severe courses of drinking. They are naturally much addicted to this fatal custom; but when it is encouraged and enforced by those who call themselves an enlightened people, it certainly is not only blameable, but highly criminal. Were common sense but made use of to direct the conduct of those who are benefited by the trade carried on with the Indians, self-interest and good policy would teach them to discourage, as much as possible, a habit so prejudicial to them, and fatally destructive to these miserable people. They are generally of a benevolent disposition, and easy to be persuaded by persons who understand their language; but as a most unconscionable gain is got by trading in spirits with them, it is not to be supposed the factors will ever be induced to put a stop to this unchristian practice. An Indian will barter away all his furs, nay even leave himself without a rag to cover his nakedness, in exchange for that vile unwholesome stuff, called English brandy. If by such excessive intoxication they only irreparably injured their own constitutions, and debilitated their race, the consequences, though pernicious, would not be so dreadful as they usually are; but during their intoxication not only fresh quarrels ensue, old grievances are also renewed, and death is frequently the consequence of former bickerings, which but for this stimulator had been buried in oblivion.

The following tragical instances of the baneful effects of these poisonous distillations, happened, among many others, under my own knowledge. Excess of liquor frequently makes Europeans merry and gay, but with the Indian it has a contrary effect: at this time he recollects his departed friends and relations; he laments their death very pathetically with tears; and if near the graves of any of them, will sometimes run out and weep at them. Others again will join in chorus in a song, although unable to hold up their heads; and it is not uncommon for them to roll about the tent in a fit of frenzy, and frequently into the fire. On these occasions some quarrel is sure to take place, and some ancient disagreement is revived. They sometimes have the precaution to order the women to remove all offensive weapons out of the tent; but as they cannot part with their teeth, it is not unusual to see some of them the next morning without a nose. Sometimes they come off with the loss of an ear, or joint of a finger. In these affrays no regard is paid to relationship, brothers and sisters often engaging each other. After one of these encounters, an Indian entered the Fort one morning, and desired to be admitted to the surgeon; as soon as he got into his apartment, he saluted him in broken English with "Look here, man, here my nose," at the same time holding out his hand, with half his nose in it, which he wanted the surgeon to put on again, for they have a great opinion of the faculty. The man's nephew, it seems, had bit it off, and he declared, that he felt no pain, nor was sensible of his loss, till awaking the next morning he found the piece laying by his side.

A few years since, a party of Indians came down to trade, and the first day of their arrival, as their invariable custom is, got drunk. In this state of inebriation, as two of them were struggling together, one of them finding that he could not disengage himself from his antagonist, snatched a bayonet out of its case, and stabbed him in the breast. On hearing a noise, some persons went into the tent to learn the cause; when they found the

unhappy man in a most desperate state, his lungs protruding through the wound, as large as a man's hand, at each respiration. A tent was pitched for him within the Factory works, and every assistance was given him by the English, but he died on the fifteenth day.

At another time three Indian men were sent with a packet from York Fort to Churchill River. The first thing to be done after they arrived at the place of destination, was, as usual, to get dead drunk. There happened to be an Indian here, who had formerly borne some animosity to one of these packet-men, but which had never been thought of when reason possessed the senses; the fumes of the liquor, however, revived, with peculiar acrimony, the revenge which lay buried in his bosom. After discoursing together for some time, and irritating each other with bitter retorts, the man who supposed himself injured went into the Factory, and procured a bayonet from the Governor, with which he very soon put a period to the existence of his unhappy adversary. The deceased left a wife and eight children.

I could recount upwards of forty instances of a similar kind, which occurred to me whilst I was in Hudson's Bay, where revenge, and destruction, marked the steps of the drunken savage; but the above instances will sufficiently shew the iniquity and evil tendency of supplying the Indians with spirituous liquors, and encouraging the immoderate use of them. By this diabolical commerce the country is impoverished of inhabitants, the trade of course imperceptibly declines, and this extensive settlement is in a great measure prevented from rivalling many of our other foreign establishments.

The natives of Hudson's Bay are a people of a middle size, of a copper complexion, their features regular and agreeable, and few distorted or deformed persons are seen among them. When young they have excessive large bellies, which is to be attributed to the enormous quantity of food they devour; but as they grow towards puberty this part decreases to a common size. Their

constitutions are strong and healthy, and their disorders few; the chief of these is the dysentery, and a violent pain in the breast, which the English call the Country Distemper. The latter is supposed to proceed from the cold air being drawn into the lungs; which impeding the vessels from spreading throughout that organ, hinders the circulation, and renders respiration extremely painful and difficult; yet I never heard of any dying of it. The venereal disease is also very common among them, but the symptoms are much milder than in Europe, perhaps owing to their diet, which is void of spices, or salt, and of spirituous liquors, when from the Factory. They seldom live to a great age, but enjoy all their faculties to the last.

In their dispositions they are mild, affable, and good-natured, when sober; but when intoxicated they are lost to every social quality, and discover the greatest propensity to quarrelling, theft, and the worst of vices. When we view the fair side of their characters, we find them kind, courteous, and benevolent to each other, relieving the wants and necessities of their distressed brethren with the greatest good-nature, either by counsel, food or cloathing. The good effects of this excellent disposition are frequently experienced by themselves; for, as in their mode of life no one knows how soon it may be his own fate to be reduced to the verge of extremity, he secures for himself a return of kindness, should he experience that vicissitude. On the other hand, they are fly, cunning, and artful to a great degree; they glory in every species of furacity and artifice, especially when the theft or deception has been so well executed as to escape detection. Their love to their offspring is carried to a very great height. From the state of childhood to maturity they seldom or never correct their children, alledging, that when they grow up they will know better of themselves. Neither is this indulgence made a bad use of when reflection succeeds the irregularities of youth; on the contrary, sentiments of reverence, gratitude, and love, link their affections to the authors of their being; and they seldom fail to

give the utmost assistance to their aged parents whenever their imbecility requires it.

With respect to their corporeal abilities, they are almost without exception great walkers; they patiently endure cold, hunger, and fatigue; and bear all misfortunes with admirable fortitude and resignation, which enables them bravely to encounter the prospect of ill, and renders the mind serene under the pressure of adversity. As their country abounds with innumerable herds of deer, elks, and buffaloes, they frequently make great slaughter among them; and upon these occasions they have no regard to futurity, or providing for an unsuccessful day. Whether they happen to be pining under the grasp of pinching necessity, or enjoying themselves in all the happiness of health and plenty, they kill all they can, having an incontrovertible maxim among them, which is, "the more they kill, the more they have to kill:" and this opinion, though diametrically opposite to reason or common sense, is as pertinaciously held by them, as his tenets are by the most bigotted enthusiast. Indeed, they too frequently find it to their cost to be grounded on folly, as they sometimes suffer extreme hunger through it; nay, many have been starved to death, and others have been reduced to the sad necessity of devouring their own offspring.

As a great part of the Factory provisions consists of geese killed by the Indians, the English supply them with powder and shot for this purpose, allowing them the value of a beaver skin for every ten geese they kill; accordingly, after the Indian has got this supply, he sets off from his tent early in the morning into the marshes, where he sets himself down, with a degree of patience difficult to be imitated, and being sheltered by a few willows, waits for the geese. They shoot them flying, and are so very dexterous at this sport, that a good hunter will kill, in times of plenty, fifty or sixty in a day. Few Europeans are able to endure cold, fatigue, hunger, or adversity in any shape, with an equal degree of magnanimity and composure to that which is

familiar to the natives of this country. After being out a whole day on a hunt, exposed to the bleakest winds and most penetrating cold, and that without the least thing to satisfy the calls of nature, an Indian comes home, warms himself at the fire, smoaks a few pipes of tobacco, and then retires to rest, as calm as if in the midst of plenty; but if he happens to have a family, he cannot always boast of this equanimity; when reduced to extremity, his affection for them predominates over his philosophy, if it might be so called, and it gives way to the most pungent sorrow.

A blind and unconquerable superstition bears a principal share in the character of these unpolished Indians. By this he is induced to impute every occurrence of his life to supernatural causes. His good or bad success in hunting, the welfare of his friends and family, his duration in this mortal state, &c. all depend upon the capricious will and pleasure of some invisible agent, whom he supposes to preside over all his undertakings: for instance, one man will invoke a conspicuous star, another a wolf, one a bear, and another a particular tree; which he imagines influences his good or ill fortune in this life.

In the spring of 1779, some Indians, who were employed in the vicinity of York Fort in the goose hunt, were so influenced by these superstitious ideas, that they believed the Devil, with hideous howlings, frequented their tent every night. They came to the Factory quite dejected, and told the Governor a lamentable tale, setting forth, with pathetic energy, the distresses they were exposed to from this visitation of the Father of Iniquity. So overcome were they by their apprehensions, that they kept large fires continually burning all night, and sleeping only in the daytime. One of them declared that he had fired his gun at him, but *unluckily* missed him. He described him to be of human shape, going about with cloaths, and taking prodigious strides over the snow. The Indians believed that he came in quest of some of their families, a part of which must be sacrificed to assuage his anger. A little brandy, however, properly applied,

had a wonderful effect; for after going through a course of enebriation for two days, all the fears that the Devil had occasioned were dissipated. It proved afterwards, that the formidable enemy that had caused such a panic among them, was nothing more than a night owl, which had frequented this place. This bird, by the shrieks and dismal noise which he makes in the night, frequently causes such apprehensions in the minds of the Indians, that it works upon their imaginations to such a degree, as to induce them to believe the Devil is really and substantially present.

Exclusive of these superstitious ideas, the religious sentiments of these people, though confused, are in many respects just. They allow that there is a good Being, and they sometimes sing to him; but not out of fear or adoration, for he is too good, they say, to hurt them. He is called *Kitch-e-man-e-to*, or the Great Chief. They further say, there is an evil Being, who is always plaguing them; they call him *Whit-ti-co*. Of him they are very much in fear, and seldom eat any thing, or drink any brandy, without throwing some into the fire for *Whit-ti-co*. If any misfortune befalls them, they sing to him, imploring his mercy; and when in health and prosperity do the same, to keep him in good humour. Yet, though obsequious sometimes, at others they are angry with him, especially when in liquor; they then run out of their tents, and fire their guns in order to kill him. They frequently persuade themselves that they see his track in the moss or snow, and he is generally described in the most hideous forms. They believe that both the good and the bad Being have many servants; those of the former inhabiting the air, but those of the latter walking on the earth. They have likewise an opinion that this country was once overflowed; an opinion founded on meeting with many sea shells far inland.

They have no manner of government or subordination. The father, or head of a family, owns no superior, nor obeys any command. He gives his advice or opinion of things, but at the

same time has no authority to enforce obedience: the youth of his family follow his directions, but rather from filial affection or reverence, than in consequence of any duty exacted by a superior. When several tents or families meet to go to war, or to the Factories to trade, they choose a leader, but it is only voluntary obedience they pay to the leader so chosen; every one is at liberty to leave him when he pleases, and the notion of a commander is quite obliterated as soon as the voyage is over. Merit alone gives the title to distinction; and the possession of qualities that are held in esteem is the only method to obtain respect. Thus a person who is an experienced hunter; one who knows the communication between the lakes and rivers; one who can make long harangues; is a conjurer; or if he has a family; such a man will not fail of being followed by several Indians, when they happen to be out in large parties; they likewise follow him down to trade at the settlements: he is, however, obliged to secure their attendance upon this occasion by promises and rewards, as the regard paid to his abilities is of too weak a nature to command subjection. In war a mutual resentment against their enemies forms their union for perpetrating their revenge. Personal courage, patience under hardships, and a knowledge of the manners and country of their adversaries, are the qualifications sought after in the choice of a leader. They follow him, whom they have thus chosen, with fidelity, and execute his projects with alacrity; but their obedience does not proceed from any right in the leader to command, it is solely founded on his merits, on the affection of his followers, and their desire of subduing their enemies. These sentiments actuate every breast, and augment the union; while in more civilized nations such a compact is effected by submission to the laws of government.

Some years since, the Company being informed that the Indians frequently brought fine pieces of copper to their settlements on Churchill River, they took it into consideration, and appointed a person, with proper assistants, to survey and examine

the river where this valuable acquisition was supposed to be concealed. The person employed in this business⁶ gives the following account of his expedition, which will describe the Indian method of going to war. These are his words:

In 62 deg. 57 min. N. latitude, and 18 W. longitude, from Churchill River, is where we built our canoes in 1771; there many Northern Indians joined us, and finding we were intended for the copper mine river, that summer, between 70 and 80 stout fellows agreed to accompany us, with no other intent than to kill the Esquimaux. I used my best endeavours to persuade them from this design, but to no purpose; for, instead of my advice having the desired effect, they imputed it to cowardice. That being a character I always despised, I was obliged to sum up my best endeavours, to retrieve my then fading honour; and told them, I cared not if they made the name of an Esquimaux extinct, and though I was no enemy to them, yet if I found it necessary for my own safety, or for the safety of those who were with me, that I should not be afraid of an Esquimaux. This declaration caused great shouts of satisfaction. They then began to prepare their targets, or shields, as soon as possible. Their targets are made of boards three feet long, two broad, and 3-4ths of an inch thick, and so slung on the left arm, as to be of no hindrance in loading and firing their guns. Our war implements being all ready, we set out on our expedition, and by the 21st June, were in lat. 68 deg. 54 min. N. and 22 deg. 21 min. W. from Churchill. Here we agreed to leave all the women, and every other incumbrance. Accordingly, after staying a few days to kill as many deer and buffaloes as would serve them till our return, we proceeded again, and arrived at the copper river on the 13th July; and, as I found afterwards, about 40 miles from it's entrance. On our arrival, the Indians dispatched three men before, as spies, to see if any Esquimaux were tenting about the river. On the 15th of the same month, as I was continuing my survey towards the mouth of the river, we met the three spies above-mentioned, who informed us of five tents of Esquimaux being on the West side of the river, and by their comparison of the distance, I judged it to be about twelve miles off. On their receiving this news, they would pay no more attention to my survey; but their whole

⁶Samuel Hearne. There is a sketch of Hearne's life in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and a fuller account in the "Introduction" to J. B. Tyrrell (ed.), *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1934), pp. 25-31.

thoughts were immediately engaged in planning the best method how to steal on them in the night, and kill them while asleep. After having all their apparatus ready for the ensuing slaughter, they began to invoke their different patronizing agents by the following superstition. All the men painted the front of their targets, some with the image of the Sun, others with the Moon, others with different kinds of birds and beasts of prey, and some with the images of imaginary fairies, which, according to their silly imaginations, inhabit the elements. By strict enquiry into the cause of this superstition, I found that each man had the image of that agent painted on his target which he relied on for success in the ensuing enterprize. Some were contented with a single representation, while others (doubtful of the quality of any single being) would have their targets covered to the very margin, with a group of hieroglyphics quite unintelligible. This piece of superstition being compleated, we then began to advance towards the Esquimaux. The number of our company being so far superior to the five tents of Esquimaux, portended no less than a total massacre, unless kind Providence should work a miracle in their favour. It was about ten o'clock in the morning, when they made their attack upon their unhappy enemies, whom they found fast asleep. In a few minutes the havock was begun, myself standing neuter in the rear. Presently a scene, truly shocking, presented itself to my view; for as the Esquimaux were surprized at a time when they thought themselves in the midst of security, they had neither power nor time to make any resistance. Men, women and children ran out of the tents stark-naked; but where could they fly for shelter? They soon fell a sacrifice to Indian fury. The shrieks and groans of the expiring were truly horrible; and it was much increased by the sight of a young girl, about 18 years old, whom they killed so nigh to me, that when the first spear was struck into her, she fell down, and twisted herself about my legs; and it was some difficulty for me to disengage myself from her dying grasps. As the Indians pursued her, I solicited for her life; but this was so far from being granted, that I was not fully assured of my own being entirely in safety, for offering to speak in her behalf. When I begged her life, the fellows made no reply, till they had both their spears through her, and fixed into the ground. They then looked me sternly in the face, and began to upbraid me, asking if I wanted an Esquimaux wife? at the same time paying no regard to the shrieks of the poor girl, who was then twining about the spears like an eel: indeed, I was obliged at last to request them to be more expeditious in dispatching her out of her misery, otherwise I should be obliged

in pity to assist in that friendly office, by putting an end to a life so mortally wounded. The terror of mind I must inevitably be in from such a situation, is easier to be conceived than described. When this horrid work was compleated, we observed seven more tents on the opposite side the river. The people belonging to them appeared to be in great confusion, but did not offer to make their escape. The Indians fired many shots at them across the river, but the poor Esquimaux were so unacquainted with the nature of guns, that when the bullets struck the rocks, they run in bodies to see what was sent them, and seemed curious in examining the pieces of lead they found flattened on the rocks, 'till at last one man was shot through the calf of the leg, after which they immediately embarked in their canoes with their wives and children, and paddled to a shoal in the river. After the invaders had killed every soul they could get at, they began breaking the stone kettles and copper work, which the Esquimaux make use of instead of iron. When this was done, they assembled on the top of a high hill, calling out *Tima, Tima*, by way of derision to the surviving Esquimaux. We then went up the river about half a mile, to the place where our tents and baggage were, with an intent to cross over and plunder the other seven tents. It taking up a considerable time for all to cross the river, and being entirely under cover of the rocks, the poor Esquimaux, whom we left on the shoal, thought we were gone about our business, and had returned to their tents again. Accordingly, the Indians ran on them, but they having their canoes ready, they all embarked, and reached the shoal above-mentioned, except one man, who, being over attentive in tying up his things, he had no time to reach the canoe, so fell as sacrifice to their savage ferocity, for they made his body like a strainer. After the Indians had plundered these tents of every thing worth their notice, they threw the tent poles into the river, broke their stone kettles, and did all the damage they could, to distress the poor survivors. We found an aged woman spearing salmon a short distance up the river, whom they barbarously butchered, every man having a thrust at her with his spear.

Thus finishes this Gentleman's account of the War Expedition of the Indians by whom he was accompanied, which furnishes us with no bad idea of the manner in which they carry on these excursions. I must here observe, that his abilities were every way adequate to the important undertaking he was engaged in, that of determining the truth of a copper-mine being up the

country. He was two years in search of this valuable repository, which no doubt might prove of great consequence, were it prosecuted with a laudable spirit of industry; but the Company, I must again repeat, damp every enquiry tending to exhibit the value of the territories they exclusively enjoy. Their trade, in its present state, is a matter of small consequence to this nation. Their views are narrow and selfish, and their whole constitution is enveloped in secrecy and obscurity.

The Indian's method of dividing the time, is by numbering the nights elapsed, or to come; thus, if he be asked how long he has been on his journey, he will answer, "so many nights." From this nocturnal division, they proceed to the lunar or monthly division, reckoning twelve of these in the year, all of which are expressive of some remarkable event or appearance, that happens during that revolution of the moon. For instance—

| | |
|------------|--|
| JANUARY, | They call Kee-sha-pou-ur-te-can-um, by reason of the intense cold found at this time. |
| FEBRUARY, | Sha-peshem, or the old moon. |
| MARCH, | Mee-kee-su-a-peshem, or the Eagle-moon; because these birds visit their coasts in this month. |
| APRIL, | Nis-cau-peshem, or the Goose moon. |
| MAY, | Atheek-a-peshem, or the Frog moon. |
| JUNE, | Opineou-a-pechem, because most birds are now laying their eggs. |
| JULY, | Opus-cou-a-peshem, because the geese are now moulting their feathers. |
| AUGUST, | Opo-ho-a-peshem, because the birds are now beginning to fly. |
| SEPTEMBER, | Wuf-ker-ho-a-peshem, because the deer are now shedding their horns. |
| OCTOBER, | We-fac-a-peshem, because it is the Rutting season with the deer. |
| NOVEMBER, | As-kut-ta-te-su-a-peshem, this implies that the rivers are now frozen over. |
| DECEMBER, | Pou-watch-e-can-a-sish-a-peshem, because the severity of the frost makes the brush fall from the pine-trees. |

Their method of computing numbers is rather abstruse, as they reckon chiefly by decades; as follows:—Two tens, three tens, &c. Ten tens, or an hundred tens. A few units over or under, are added or subtracted. Thus, 32 in their tongue is expressed, by saying 3 tens and 2 over;—37 would be expressed by saying, 3 tens and 7 over, or 4 tens wanting three. If they reckon any large number, a skin or stick is laid down for every ten, and afterwards tied in a bundle, for the aggregate of the whole.

Before the Canadian merchants pursued the Fur Trade with such diligence as they now do through the Lakes, and had penetrated into the interior parts of Hudson's Bay, a great number of Indians used annually to come down to the Company's Settlements to trade their skins. And though the Company have now in a great measure lost the benefit of this lucrative traffic, it may not be amiss to mention the manner in which the Indians prosecute their voyages to the Factories.

In the month of March, the Upland Indians assemble on the banks of a particular river or lake, the nomination of which had been agreed on by common consent, before they separated for the winter. Here they begin to build their canoes, which are generally compleated very soon after the river ice breaks. They then commence their voyage, but without any regularity, all striving to be foremost; because those who are first have the best chance of procuring food. During the voyage, each leader canvasses, with all manner of art and diligence, for people to join his gang; influencing some by presents, and others by promises; for the more canoes he has under his command, the greater he appears at the Factory.

Being come near their journey's end, they all put ashore; the women to go in the woods to gather pine-brush for the bottom of the tents; while the leaders smoke together, and regulate the procession. This being settled, they re-embark, and soon after arrive at the Factory. If there is but one Captain, his situation is in the center of the canoes; if more, they place themselves

on the wings; and their canoes are distinguished by having a small flag hoisted on a stick, and placed in the stern.

When they arrive within a few hundred yards of the Fort, they discharge their fowling-pieces, to compliment the English; who, in return, salute them by firing two or three small cannon. The leaders seldom concern themselves with taking out the bundles, but the other men will assist the women. The Factor being informed that the Indians are arrived, sends the trader to introduce the leaders with their lieutenants, who are usually their eldest sons or nearest relations. Chairs are placed for them to sit down on, and pipes, &c. are introduced. During the time the leader is smoking, he says very little, but as soon as this is over, he begins to be more talkative; and fixing his eyes immovably on the ground, he tells the Factors how many canoes he has brought, what Indians he has seen, asks how the Englishmen do, and says he is glad to see them. After this the Governor bids him welcome, tells him he has good goods and plenty, and that he loves the Indians, and will be kind to them. The pipe is by this time removed, and the conversation becomes free.

During this visit, the Chief is drest out at the expence of the Factory in the following manner: a coarse cloth coat, either red or blue, lined with baize, and having regimental cuffs; and a waistcoat and breeches of baize. The suit is ornamented with orris lace. He is also presented with a white or check shirt; his stockings are of yarn, one of them red, the other blue, and tied below the knee with worsted garters; his Indian shoes are sometimes put on, but he frequently walks in his stocking-feet; his hat is coarse, and bedecked with three ostrich feathers of various colours, and a worsted sash tied round the crown; a small silk handkerchief is tied round his neck, and this compleats his dress. The Lieutenant is also presented with a coat, but it has no lining; he is likewise provided with a shirt and a cap, not unlike those worn by mariners.

The guests being now equipped, bread and prunes are

brought and set before the Captain, of which he takes care to fill his pockets, before they are carried out to be shared in his tent; a two gallon keg of brandy, with pipes and tobacco for himself and followers, are likewise set before him. He is now conducted from the fort to his tent in the following manner: In the front a halbard and ensign are carried; next a drummer beating a march; then several of the Factory servants bearing the bread, prunes, pipes, tobacco, brandy, &c. Then comes the Captain, walking quite erect and stately, smoaking his pipe, and conversing with the Factor. After this follows the Lieutenant, or any other friend, who had been admitted into the fort with the leader. They find the tent ready for their reception, and with clean pine brush and beaver coats placed for them to sit on. Here the brandy, &c. is deposited, and the Chief gives orders to some respectable person to make the usual distribution to his comrades. After this the Factor takes his leave, and it is not long before they are all intoxicated; when they give loose to every species of disorderly tumult, such as singing, crying, fighting, dancing, &c. and fifty to one but some one is killed before the morning. Such are the sad effects of the vile composition they are furnished with upon these occasions.

After continuing in a state of intoxication, bordering on madness, for two or three days, their mental faculties return by degrees, and they prepare themselves for renewing the league of friendship, by smoaking the calimut. The ceremony of which is as follows: A pipe made of stone is filled with Brazil tobacco, mixed with a herb something like European box. The stem of the pipe is three or four feet long, and decorated with various pieces of lace, bears claws, and eagles talons, and likewise with variegated feathers, the spoils of the most beauteous of the feathered tribe. The pipe being fixed to the stem and lighted, the Factor takes it in both his hands, and with much gravity rises from his chair, and points the end of the stem to the East, or sun-rise, then to the Zenith, afterwards to the West, and then

perpendicularly down to the Nadir. After this he takes three or four hearty whiffs, and having done so, presents it to the Indian leader, from whom it is carried round to the whole party, the women excepted, who are not permitted to smook out of the sacred pipe. When it is intirely smoaked out, the Factor takes it again, and having twirled it three or four times over his head, lays it deliberately on the table; which being done, all the Indians return him thanks by a kind of sighing out the word Ho.

Though the above ceremony made use of by the Indians, in smoking the calimut, may appear extremely ridiculous and incomprehensible, yet when we are made acquainted with their ideas in this respect, the apparent absurdity of the custom will vanish. By this ceremony they mean to signify to all persons concerned, that whilst the sun shall visit the different parts of the world, and make day and night; peace, firm friendship, and brotherly love, shall be established between the English and their country, and the same on their part. By twirling the pipe over the head, they further intend to imply, that all persons of the two nations, wheresover they may be, shall be included in the friendship and brotherhood, now concluded or renewed.

After this ceremony is over, and a further gratification of bread, prunes, &c, is presented, the leader makes a speech, generally to the following purport:

You told me last year to bring many Indians to trade, which I promised to do; you see I have not lied; here are a great many young men comes with me; use them kindly, I say; let them trade good goods; let them trade good goods, I say! We lived hard last winter and hungry, the powder being short measure and bad; being short measure and bad, I say! Tell your servants to fill the measure, and not to put their thumbs within the brim; take pity on us, take pity on us, I say! We paddle a long way to see you; we love the English. Let us trade good black tobacco, moist and hard twisted; let us see it before it is opened. Take pity on us; take pity on us, I say! The guns are bad, let us trade light guns, small in the hand, and well shaped, with locks that will not freeze in the winter, and red gun cases. Let the young men have more than measure of tobacco; cheap kettles,

thick, and high. Give us good measure of cloth; let us see the old measure; do you mind me? The young men loves you, by coming so far to see you; take pity, take pity, I say; and give them good goods; they like to dress and be fine. Do you understand me?

As soon as the Captain has finished his speech, he with his followers, proceed to look at the guns and tobacco; the former they examine with the most minute attention. When this is over they trade their furs promiscuously; the leader being so far indulged, as to be admitted into the trading-room all the time, if he desires it.

The principal things necessary for their support of an Indian and his family, and which they usually trade for, are the following: a gun, a hatchet, an ice chisel, Brazil tobacco; knives, files, flints, powder and shot, a powder horn, a bayonet, a kettle, cloth, beads, and the like.

*A concise Account of the TRADE to HUDSON'S BAY, with the
Method pursued by the COMPANY in carrying it on*

THE first adventurers procured a charter from King Charles the Second, for an exclusive trade to these countries, which is dated May 2, 1670. Prince Rupert was their first Governor; the Duke of Albemarle, Lord Craven, Lord Arlington, and several other noble personages, constituted the first committee. The tenor of this charter is as full, ample, and comprehensive, as words can well make it; and, as if they suspected the intrusion of some adventurers on their territories, to participate in this valuable trade, the most severe penalties, with forfeiture of property, are laid on all those, who shall haunt, frequent, or trade upon their coasts; how far their successors have been entitled to these exclusive immunities, or how far their confined manner of carrying on the trade has proved beneficial to the country, I shall endeavour to point out; humbly submitting the observations I shall make, to the candour and impartiality of my readers.

The first traders to these parts acted upon principles much more laudable and benevolent, than their successors seem to have been actuated by. From several letters which I have read of an early date, they appear to have had the good of the country at heart; and to have endeavoured by every equitable means, to render their commerce profitable to the mother country. Their instructions to their factors were full of sentiments of Christianity, and contained directions for their using every means in their power, to reclaim the uncivilized Indians from a state of barbarism, and to inculcate in their rude minds the humane precepts of the gospel. They were at the same time admonished to trade with them equitably, and to take no advantage of their native simplicity. They were further instructed to explore the country,

and to reap such benefit from the soil and produce thereof, as might redound to the interest of the English nation, as well as contribute to their own emolument. And lastly, they were directed to be particularly careful in seeing that the European servants behaved orderly, and lived in sobriety and temperance, observing a proper veneration for the service of God, which was ordered to be collectively performed at every seasonable opportunity.

These were injunctions worthy the exalted stations and rank in life of those who had the first direction of the affairs of the Company; and reflected much honour on their characters, as men and christians: and had these praise-worthy establishments been adhered to, the country granted them might at this day have been an ornament to the state, and a gem in the imperial diadem, —But mark the contrast.

Instead of encouraging the trade, by a mild, equitable, and engaging deportment towards the natives;—instead of ingratiating themselves by affability and condescension with a harmless people, they use them with undeserved rigour, causing them frequently to be beat and mal-treated, although they have come some hundreds of miles in order to barter their skins, and procure a few necessaries to guard against the severity of the approaching winter: and this is one reason why the trade of York Fort has so materially declined of late years; the decrease has chiefly arisen from the cruel treatment the Indians generally receive from the Factors.

I resided seven years under one of the Governors of that settlement⁷, during which time, I can with the greatest truth declare, that the trade yearly decreased, and that entirely through his repeated bad treatment of the Indians. At a time when the inhabitants of this part of America are annually diminishing,

⁷This was Humphrey Marten. See the account of his life in J. B. Tyrrell (ed.), *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1934), Appendix B.

from the excessive use of spirituous liquors, and the distempers incident to the climate;—at a time when they have near them, as rivals in the trade, more industrious and successful adventurers, (I mean the Canadian traders;), it certainly would be more commendable and politic in the Company's servants, to endeavour to gain the affections of the Indians, by every exertion in their power; more especially by condescension, by fair dealing, and by cultivating reciprocal amity between the Company and all the nations they trade with. Another reason why the Company's trade is so very insignificant, is a total want of spirit in themselves, to push it on with that vigour the importance of the contest deserves. The merchants from Canada have been heard to acknowledge, that were the Hudson's Bay Company to prosecute their inland trade in a spirited manner, they must be soon obliged to give up all thoughts of penetrating into the country; as from the vicinity of the Company's factories to the inland parts, they can afford to undersel them in every branch.

To explain this emulation between the Company and the Canadian traders, it will be necessary to go back a few years, and review the state of the Company in the year 1773. About that time the Canadian traders from Montreal, actuated by a laudable spirit of industry and adventure, and experiencing the pecuniary advantages that resulted from their exertions, had become so numerous and indefatigable at the head of the rivers which lead to the Company's settlements, that the trade of the latter was in a great measure cut off from its usual channel. The Indians being supplied with every thing they could wish for at their own doors, had no longer occasion, as they hitherto had done, to build canoes, and paddle several hundred miles, for the sake of cultivating a commerce with Europeans; in which peregrination they were frequently exposed to much danger from hunger; so much so, that at one time, seven canoes of upland Indians perished on their return to their own country.

Ever since the above period, the Canadian adventurers have annually increased in the upland country, much to their own emolument, and the great loss of the Company; who, it may be said, are sleeping at the edge of the sea, without spirit, and without vigour or inclination to assert that right, which their exclusive charter, according to their own account, entitles them to.

It is true, they have at this time a few establishments in the interior country; but these are carried on in such a languid manner, that their exertions have hitherto proved inadequate to the purpose of supplanting their opponents. Though the factors on this employ repeatedly urged the absolute necessity of allowing the servants inland, an additional stipend, it was not till the year 1782, that they could be prevailed upon to give them fifteen pounds per annum; while the Canadian merchants gave their labouring hands from thirty to forty pounds per year. This ill-timed parsimony, is in the highest degree impolitic; for they are obliged to leave a considerable quantity of furs inland every year, for want of men to navigate the canoes; and as these skins are much accumulated by the next year's trade they have always furs to a very considerable amount, dead and unprofitable on their hands.

In the next place, their employing Indians for this purpose, helps to compleat the measure of their stupidity; for, after the natives have traded their furs, they are paid to the value of twelve beaver skins for every bundle taken down to the Factory, and the same for every bundle of goods brought back. In this manner are they employed for near six months in the year, and thereby prevented from attending to their hunting excursions; in which, during the time they are thus engaged, they might have collected a good quantity of furs. This is not all;—as they suppose the Company cannot do without them, they set a great value on their services, and omit no opportunity of letting the factors know, that they are able to form a proper estimate of their consequence.

To obviate these difficulties, the traders from Montreal employ all Canadian servants, who are in every respect better adapted for the service than the indolent Indians.

The Company signify to their Factors, that they have an indisputable right to all the territories about Hudson's Bay, not only including the Straits and Bay, with all the rivers, inlets, &c. therein, but likewise to all the countries, lakes, &c. indefinitely to the westward, explored and unexplored. They therefore stigmatize the Canadian merchants with the insulting epithets of pedlars, thieves, and interlopers; though the quantity of furs imported by themselves bears no comparison to those sent from Canada. If this unbounded claim, to which they pretend, be founded upon justice, why, in the name of equity, do they not assert these pretensions by a proper application to Parliament to remove the industrious pedlars, whom they would seem to look upon with such ineffable contempt, and prevent their any longer encroaching on their territories; but the shock they received from the parliamentary application of the patriotic Mr. Dobbs, in the year 1749, has given them a distaste to parliamentary inquiries. They know the weakness of their claim, and the instability of their pretensions; it is therefore their interest to hide from an inquisitive and deluded nation, every investigation which might tend to bring to light the futility of their proceedings.

If the Canadian traders can adduce any profit to themselves by prosecuting this inland business, what are not the Hudson's Bay Company enabled to do, with every advantage on their side? The former pay their servants four times the salary which the latter do; the difficulties and dangers they have to encounter are much greater; the distance from Montreal to the interior country is immense; so that when put in competition with the advantages and conveniences of the Hudson's Bay Company, they will not admit of the slightest comparison. The goods which the latter land in the country in August, are realized in London the ensuing autumn; whereas the Canadian merchants are always two

years in advance; the goods which are sent from Montreal in May, making no returns in the London market till two years afterwards.

Notwithstanding they have so many obstacles to surmount, the following account of the furs imported from Canada in 1782 will shew of what value this trade is to the nation, and the indefatigable industry of those who carry it on. According to the Hudson's Bay Company's method of bringing all kinds of furs into beaver, the total amount of the skins imported, by this valuation is 281,493, which sold for 127,423l. 7s. 5d. By this calculation it appears, that the Hudson's Bay Company do not import, from all their settlements, so many furs in four years, as these *poor pedlars* do in one.

In the course of the inquiry in 1749, it appeared by papers laid by the Company before the Honourable House of Commons, that their original stock had been from time to time augmented, as underneath.

| | £. |
|--|-----------|
| 1676. Oct. 16. It appeared by their books that | |
| their stock then was - - - - - | 10,500 |
| -690. Sept. The same being trebled, is - - | 31,500 |
| 1720. Aug. 29. Their stock being again | |
| trebled, is - - - - - | 94,500 |
| A subscription was then taken at 10 per cent. | |
| amounting to - - - - - | 3,150 |
| Dec. 23. which being doubled, is - - - | 6,300 |
| | <hr/> |
| | £.103,950 |

A LIST of the PROPRIETORS of STOCK at that Time

The KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY

Dame Mary Abner
 Mrs. Sarah Ashurst
 Mrs. Sarah Ainsworth
 Mr. Thomas Astley
 Mr. James Aston
 Mrs. Charlotte Batt

Peter Elers, Esq.
 Mr. Thomas Elerton
 George Elers, Esq.
 Mr. Isaac Franks
 Mr. Francis Gostling
 Charles Gostling, Esq.

Mrs. Osmond Beavoir
 Mr. Samuel Bennet
 Dr. William Berryman
 Charles Berryman
 William Gould
 Mary Hudson
 Mrs. Hermanus Berens
 Henry Robert Boyleader
 Mrs. Sarah Bearcliffe
 Edward Beumaby, Esq.
 Rev. Daniel Beumaby
 Mrs. Hannah Bristow
 Mr. Thomas Hill
 Mr. Peter Hudson
 Sir Edward Hulse, Bart.
 Samuel Jones, Esq.
 Captain John Jacobs
 Thomas Knapp, Esq.
 Sir Atwell Lake, Bart.
 William Elderton
 Bybye Lake, Esq.
 Mr. William Leapidge
 Mr. John Loton
 Mr. John Perry
 Mr. George Love
 Mr. John Anthony Merle
 John Merry, Esq.
 Robert Merry, Esq.
 Mr. Robert Manning
 Mrs. Mary Butterfield
 Alexander Campbell, Esq.
 John Carew, Esq.
 Mrs. Elizabeth Carew
 Mr. Edmund Chishule
 Mr. John Collet
 Henry Corneys, Esq.
 Cooper Speeke, Esq.
 George Speeke, Esq.
 Mr. Abraham Crop
 Rev. Mr. John Dalton
 Richard Dalton
 John Dalton
 Mr. William Elerton

Mr. James Gould
 Mr. Nathaniel Gyles
 Mr. Henry Hall
 Sir Thomas Hankey, Knt.
 Mr. Samuel Herring
 Mr. Francis Snell
 Henry Sperling, Esq.
 Thomas Thorpe, Esq.
 Richard Spooner, Esq.
 Mr. John Stanionder
 Mr. Henry Sykes
 Mark Hurston, Esq.
 Mr. Lodowick Mansfield
 Mrs. Ann Mitchell
 Mr. Benjamin Mitchell
 Mrs. Jane Parker
 Mr. John Pitt
 Rev. Mr. John Perry
 Mrs. Mary Perry
 Mrs. Elizabeth Pery
 Mrs. Ann Pery
 Mr. John Pery
 Mr. Samuel Herring
 Mr. John Prickard
 Samuel Pitt, Esq.
 Mr. William Poston
 Mr. Thomas Reynard
 Dr. Henry Rayner
 Samuel Remnant, Esq.
 Mr. Rowland Rogers
 Mr. Daniel Rolfe
 Mr. Nathaniel Saunderson
 Mr. James Watts
 Mr. Albert Shafter
 Mr. John Shaw
 Captain James Winter
 Mr. William Tower
 Mrs. Mary Ward
 Mr. George Wegg
 Samuel Wegg, Esq.
 George Wegg, Esq.
 Mr. Joseph Winter

*An Account of the HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY'S Exports of
Trading Goods, and Charges attending carrying on their
Trade, and maintain the Factories for Ten Years*

| Trading Goods only | | | | Factories, &c. | | | |
|--------------------|------|----|----|----------------|---------|----|----|
| Anno | £. | s. | d. | Anno | £. | s. | d. |
| 1739 - | 3477 | 8 | 5 | 1739 - | 12,245 | 14 | 9 |
| 1740 - | 4052 | 14 | 5 | 1740 - | 13,346 | 9 | 3 |
| 1741 - | 4028 | 8 | 3 | 1741 - | 11,757 | 10 | 6 |
| 1742 - | 3618 | 15 | 11 | 1742 - | 12,084 | 3 | 0 |
| 1743 - | 3613 | 13 | 0 | 1743 - | 12,772 | 0 | 5 |
| 1744 - | 4152 | 16 | 11 | 1744 - | 20,201 | 13 | 11 |
| 1745 - | 3810 | 5 | 2 | 1745 - | 21,702 | 0 | 5 |
| 1746 - | 3390 | 8 | 5 | 1746 - | 19,360 | 11 | 4 |
| 1747 - | 3143 | 18 | 4 | 1747 - | 16,609 | 13 | 4 |
| 1748 - | 3453 | 2 | 7 | 1748 - | 17,352 | 4 | 10 |
| <hr/> | | | | <hr/> | | | |
| 36,741 11 5 | | | | Factory Ch. | 157,432 | 14 | 4 |
| | | | | Tra. Goods | 36,741 | 11 | 5 |
| | | | | <hr/> | | | |
| | | | | 194,174 5 9 | | | |
| | | | | <hr/> | | | |
| | | | | Com. ann. | 19,417 | 8 | 6 |
| | | | | <hr/> | | | |

Amount of the Company's Exports for Ten Years

| | £. | s. | d. |
|------------|------|----|----|
| 1739 - | 4994 | 5 | 10 |
| 1740 - | 5630 | 10 | 11 |
| 1741 - | 5622 | 11 | 4 |
| 1742 - | 4007 | 0 | 0 |
| 1743 - | 4894 | 11 | 11 |
| 1744 - | 6736 | 0 | 9 |
| 1745 - | 5462 | 19 | 6 |
| 1746 - | 5431 | 7 | 11 |
| 1747 - | 4581 | 8 | 7 |
| 1748 - | 5102 | 12 | 3 |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 52,463 9 0 | | | |
| <hr/> | | | |

If these accounts are faithful, and we are not to suppose a set of gentlemen would attempt to impose a fallacy on that august Assembly, the dividends of the Hudson's Bay Company

must have been very small indeed; as will appear from the following recapitulation of expences, &c. from 1739 to 1748 inclusive.

| | | | |
|---|---------|----|----|
| Charges of Shipping, Factories, Servants | £. | s. | d. |
| Wages, &c. in ten years - - - - | 157,432 | 14 | 4 |
| Exports in that time - - - - | 52,463 | 9 | 0 |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Total Expences - - - - | 209,986 | 3 | 4 |
| Amount of the several Sales - | 273,542 | 18 | 8 |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Clear Profits from the Trade in Ten Years | 63,646 | 15 | 4 |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Dividends in One Year among 100 | | | |
| Proprietors - - - - - | 6,364 | 13 | 6 |
| <hr/> | | | |
| For each Proprietor - | 63 | 12 | 11 |
| <hr/> | | | |

If then they could not afford to divide more than this, in the very zenith of their prosperity, how inconsiderable must their gains have been of late years, since the Canadian traders have penetrated the interior country! Their expences have increased in a threefold proportion, and their importations have decreased at least one third since the above period.

By way of elucidating this assertion, I shall just state the difference of maintaining York Fort at present, and the expences attending the same at the time the above enquiry took place.

York Fort at this time has four subordinate settlements; at which settlements, conjointly, the Company allow 100 servants, whose wages amount to about 1860 l. per annum; besides a sloop of 60 tons, that makes a voyage once a year between York Fort and Severn Factories. To discharge these expences, they receive upon an average from them all about 25000 skins. In the year 1748, the complement of men at that settlement was no more than twenty-five, whose wages amounted to 470 l. per annum, and the trade then stood at 30,000 skins one year with another. The other establishments which the Company maintain in the Bay, have suffered the like proportional change, all decreasing in trade, and bearing additional incumbrances.

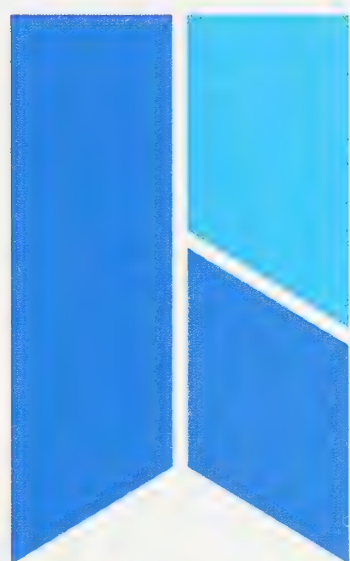
It must be observed, that the calculations in the annexed Table, with many others, were compulsively produced before the House of Commons. It is not the inclination of the Company, that the minutest matter relating to their trade should be exposed to public view. They do not even allow their factors to know what the furs sell for in London, for fear that inquisitiveness, to which mankind are prone, should lead them to speculate, and draw inferences on matters which the lords of the soil deem their own separate prerogative. But the station I was in while I resided in the Bay, enabled me to know for a certainty, that the quantity of furs imported of late years has fallen very short of their former imports; though it is allowed they sell better now than at a prior period.

As it was the ardent wish of Arthur Dobbs, Esq. and his friends, by instituting this parliamentary inquiry, to lay the trade open to the nation at large; so it was equally the desire of the Company still to enjoy those profits, by which they had benefited themselves for so many years. To accomplish this flattering end, they left no stone unturned, no evidence unproduced, which might tend to confirm them in this monopoly. Accordingly, the testimony of several witnesses was not admitted, there being reason to believe that they had been tampered with by the Company. It is not then to be supposed, that any papers were laid before the Committee of the House of Commons, but such as helped to support these pretensions, invalidate the testimony of their opponents, and screen from the inspection of the people the evil of their proceedings, as a commercial Company.

| | Lat. N. | Long. W. | Trade on Average | Indian Settlem | Ships con- signed to | Sloops in the Country | No. of Serv. |
|--------------|------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Churchill | 59 0 | 94 30 | 10,000 | | ship tons 1 of 250 | ship tons 1 of 70 | 25 |
| York Fort | 57 10 | 93 00 | 25,000 | 4 | 1 of 250 | 1 of 60 | 100 |
| Severn House | 56 12 | 88 57 | | | | | |
| Albany Fort | 52 18 | 85 18 | 5,600 | 2 | | | 50 |
| Moose Fort | 51 28 | 83 15 | 7,000 | 2 | 1 of 280 | 1 of 70 | 40 |
| Eastmain | 53 24 | 78 50 | | | | 1 of 70 | 25 |
| | | | 47,600 | 8 | 3—780 | 4—270 | 240 |

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To exhibit at one view a state of their several establishments in the Bay at present, I Subjoin the foregoing table.

A Standard of Trade, by which the Governor, or Factor, is ordered by the Company to trade with the natives. N.B. This is intended to keep up the appearance of a regular settled plan of trade; but though this farce may be played off to those who have not had the opportunities of knowing the deception, it will not have that effect upon a person who has acted for them as trader, and made up their account books.

| | | beav. | | | | beav. | |
|---------------------|------------|-------|-------|----------------------|-------|-------|------|
| Glass beads | lb. | 1 | as 2 | Orrice lace | yd. | 1 1/2 | as 1 |
| China ditto | | 1 | 6 | Rings brass | No. | 3 | 1 |
| Kettles brass | | | 1 1/2 | Files | | 1 | 1 |
| Coarse cloth | yd. | 1 | 3 | Tobacco boxes | | 1 | 1 |
| Blankets | No. | 1 | 7 | Awl blades | | 8 | 1 |
| Tobacco | Brazil lb. | 3/4 | 1 | Boxes barrel | | 3 | 1 |
| Ditto leaf | | 1 | 1 | Hawks bells | pr. | 12 | 1 |
| Ditto Eng. roll | | 1 | 1 | Sword blades | No. | 1 | 1 |
| Shirts check | No. | 1 | 2 | Ice chissels | | 1 | 1 |
| Ditto white | | 1 | 2 | Gun worms | | 4 | 1 |
| Stockings yarn | pr. | 1 | 2 | Hats coarse | | 1 | 4 |
| Powder | lb. | 1 | 1 | Trunks small leather | | 1 | 4 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Shot | | 4 | 1 | Gartering | yd. | 1 1/2 | 1 |
| Duffels | yd. | 1 | 2 | Needles | | 12 | 1 |
| Knives | No. | 4 | 1 | Hatchet | | 1 | 1 |
| Guns | | 1 | 14 | Brandy | gall. | 1 | 4 |
| Combs | | 1 | 1 | Medals | No. | 12 | 1 |
| Flints | | 16 | 1 | Thimbles | | 6 | 1 |
| Vermilion | lb | 1 | 16 | Collars brass | | 1 | 2 |
| Pistols | No. | 1 | 7 | Fire steels | | 3 | 1 |
| Sm. burning glasses | | 1 | 1 | Razors | | 2 | 1 |
| | | | | Thread | lb | 1 | 1 |

Notwithstanding this pretended Standard is in itself sufficiently hard upon the Indians, and discouraging to the trade, yet the Factors, and the Company, in conjunction, do not think it so; for out of this a pernicious overplus trade must be raised;

which, as Mr Robson^s justly observes, is big with iniquity, and striking at the very root of their trade as a chartered Company. It is intended to augment the emoluments of the Governor, at the expence of justice and common honesty. It oppresses the Indian, who lives a most wretched life, and encounters a variety of difficulties, cold, hunger, and fatigue, to procure a few necessities for himself and indigent family.

This Overplus trade, as it is called, is carried on in the following manner; for instance; suppose an Indian would trade 1 lb. of glass beads, it is set down in the stand at 2 beaver skins; but the conscientious trader will demand 3, or perhaps 4 beaver skins for it; if the Indian asks for a blanket he must pay 8 beavers; and if he would purchase a gallon of brandy, he must give after the rate of 8 beaver skins for it, as it is always one half, and sometimes two thirds water. The consequence of this griping way of trade is in the end very hurtful to themselves, as the Canadians, in the interior country, undersell them in every article.

If this were the only means which the traders pursued in dealing so unjustly by the natives, so many ingenuous and well-informed writers would not have taken up their pens to expose the Company and their servants, upon account of this unconscionable profit on their goods. It is worthy of notice, that among all those who have written on the subject, not one has attempted to vindicate the Company from the numerous and just complaints, which have from time to time been alledged against them. It would be unreasonable to suppose they all are influenced by prejudice, or actuated by chimerical illusions: No! the love of truth, and a sacred regard for their country, appears to me to be the only source from whence issue such repeated complaints of misconduct.

It is to be observed, that the Beaver Skin is the measure

^sJoseph Robson, the author of *An account of six years' residence in Hudson's-Bay* (London, 1752).

by which the Company value every kind of peltry, &c. in trading with the Indians, as will be seen by the following comparative valuation, which is annually inserted in their Account Books, but which is no more adhered to than the preceding standard.

A VALUATION, &c.

| | beav. | | | | beav. | |
|-----------------------|-------|------|---------------------|---------|-------|------|
| | 1 | as 2 | | skin | 1 | as 2 |
| Full grown moose skin | 1 | 1 | Cats | | 1 | 1 |
| Cub ditto | 1 | 3 | Otter old parchment | | 2 | 1 |
| Old bears | 1 | 1 | Ditto cub and drest | | 2 | 1 |
| Cub ditto | 1 | 4 | Martins prime | | 3 | 1 |
| Foxes black | 1 | 3 | Ditto ordinary | | 1 | 1 |
| Ditto grey | 2 | 1 | Deer buck | | 2 | 1 |
| Ditto white | 1 | 1 | Ditto doe | | 6 | 1 |
| Ditto red | 1 | 2 | Musquash | | 10 | 1 |
| Ditto brown | 1 | 2 | Goose feathers | lb. | 0 | 1 |
| Wolf | 1 | 2 | Ditto quills | No. 200 | 2 | 1 |
| Wolverins | 1 | 2 | Castorum | lb. | | |

Here again the factor has an ample field to outdo the natives in cunning, and to exhibit an unprincipled propensity to augment his own private and personal emolument. For instance, a quart of brandy by the Company's standard, should be valued at one beaver skin, but by being one half water, the price is made two beaver skins, which is equal in trade to a wolf, wolverin, or cat skin; but the trader will inform the Indian, that each of these skins is but of the same value as one beaver; so that after he has gained one beaver by the iniquitous adulteration, he gains another in the same article by trading it for any skin that is valued at one more than the beaver skin.

The same unfair dealing is practised throughout every branch of the trade, so that it would be superfluous to produce other examples. Let it suffice to state the value of a gallon of English spirits in London, and the return it makes at the same market. The Company pay at the rate of 20d. a gallon; this,

according to the foregoing manner of trading, produces eight beaver skins, weighing about 10lb. which, at the medium, of 12s. per lb. amounts to 6l. sterling;—a very considerable profit truly on the sum of 1s. 8d. But even this is sometimes exceeded; for supposing a gallon of brandy traded for otter skins, the gains are still more considerable, the return then will be about 8 l. sterling. A four-penny comb will barter for a bear's skin, which is worth 2 l.

From all which it appears, that the enormity of their transactions in trade is as inconsistent with their characters as merchants and Christians, as it is diametrically opposite to sound policy.

The Governors have a custom of trusting the natives in the fall of the year with goods to the amount of a certain number of beaver skins, which they are to repay with furs in the spring of the year, when the river ice breaks up. But it sometimes so happens, that the Indian has had bad luck in hunting; misfortunes by death, or other casualties may have happened to his family; or perhaps he has fallen in the way of the Canadian traders, the temptation of whose spirituous liquors he has not been able to resist, and consequently he had parted with his furs for their commodities, which he could get much cheaper than at the Company's settlements;—in this case, when the unfortunate Indian arrives at the Factory, which he is necessitated to visit or starve, he is reduced to such poverty, that perhaps he has not a rag to cover his nakedness, or the least property to procure one necessary article. Though this misfortune falls very heavy on the distressed Indian, the sole existence of whose family depends upon his being provided with hunting accoutrements, such was the obduracy of the Governor of York Fort, before referred to, that whenever it happened, he was so far from sympathizing with the unhappy savage, that he frequently not only unbraided but beat them most cruelly. This, however, was usually productive of no good

effect; for the Indian, not insensible to the injury he had received, went away burning with revenge, and ready to retaliate, whenever it might be in his power.

In consequence of this tyrannical usage, the trade gradually fell off, where the above person resided, and through his misconduct, the interest of his masters, has been much injured; the Indians taking their furs to other settlements. Upon these occasions, by far the greater part of them resorted to the Canadians trading inland, by which means the trade was diverted to another channel, and the oppressor as well as the Company paid dear for his unseasonable flights of passion.

The Indians are a free people, inhabiting a country of vast extent; which country they say is their own, and that we come to them for the sake of trade. They are exceedingly susceptible of injuries received, and not very prone to forgiveness; consequently this man was but little esteemed by them. Nor was he more respected by those who were so unfortunate as to serve under him. His disposition was vindictive and unsociable, to the last degree. English as well as Indians felt the weight of his oppressive temper, which diffused its corroding effect to every object. Domestic happiness was a stranger to his table, and his messmates lived a most unhappy life, under the rod of this unrelenting task-master.

Another severe stroke which the Company has lately sustained, will be an insuperable bar to their rising to their former prosperity, for many years to come, were there no other obstacle in the way; I mean the ravages which the small-pox has made among the Indians. That epidemical and raging disorder has spread an almost universal mortality throughout the country in the interior parts of Hudson's Bay, extending its destructive effects through every tribe and nation, sparing neither age nor sex. It is supposed that it was introduced among them by some of their war parties during the summer of 1781; and by the fall

of the year 1782, it had diffused itself to every known part of the country.

The distresses of the Indians by this visitation have been truly deplorable, and demand the tribute of pity from every humane person. As the small-pox had never before been among them, and they were utter strangers to the malignity of its infectious property, they at first imagined it to be no more than a simple breaking out on the skin which would disappear of itself; but it was not long before they had every reason to entertain very alarming apprehensions. Numbers began to die on every side; the infection spread rapidly; and hundreds lay expiring together without assistance, without courage, or the least glimmering hopes of recovery; for when an Indian finds himself sick, he resigns himself up to a state of insensible stupefaction, which hinders him from using even those means that may be in his power, towards removing the cause of his malady.

And as the uncertainty of savage life is such, that perhaps he may be one day exulting in the midst of plenty, and the next day pining under the distress of penury and want; to add to their affliction, they were now deprived of all manner of support.

Without the least medicinal help, or that common aid which their case demanded, a prey to hunger and disease, these forlorn Indians lay in their tents expiring, under the accumulated weight of every scourge which human nature can experience. Wolves and other wild beast infested and entered their habitations, and dragged them out, while life yet remained, to devour their miserable morbid carcases; even their faithful dogs, worn out with hunger, joined the ferocious wolves in this unnatural depredation. Heads, legs and arms, lay indiscriminately scattered about, as food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the mountains: and as none were buried, the very air became infectious, and tended to waft about the baneful contagion. Such has been the fate of many of the tribes inhabiting these parts, and which has

nearly terminated in their extinction. Of course the trade of the Company must have experienced a very considerable diminution.

It is worthy of remark, that this disorder proved more destructive among the Indians, than was ever known to be the case among civilized people; by the most moderate calculation, it was computed that scarce one in fifty survived it. But what is still more worthy of attention is, that those among them who were descended from Europeans, had much milder symptoms, and generally recovered.

A FEW REFLECTIONS *on the COMPANY'S Trade, shewing in what manner it may be Improved to the Advantage of the Nation*

AS I have been very unreserved in my remarks on the Company, and reprobating their confined manner of carrying on their trade, it is but reasonable that I should point out those means by which it may be improved, either to the advantage of the community at large, or for the more confined emolument of the present possessors.

I own it may appear presumptuous in me, were I to pretend to dictate to a set of gentlemen, who, by having this business immediately under their care, know, or at least ought to know, every source from whence a profit is to be drawn, or emolument raised, in the extensive country to which they claim a right. I must however beg leave candidly to lay before the public such circumstances relative to the country and the trade, as I know to be grounded in truth, even though I do not entertain the most distant hope of seeing them ever benefited by the numerous treasures which lie absorbed in this uncultivated waste.

It will, I doubt not, seem very mysterious to the generality of people, that this country should possess riches in itself, and the Company not turn them to their advantage, when they alone are to reap the benefit of their exertions. People will naturally be led to conclude from their conduct, that what writers have said on this subject is devoid of truth, and mere chimeras; but this is for want of knowing the peculiar views of the Company, their affection for their long fostered monopoly, and that singular obscurity which envelops their whole constitution; all which it is the purpose of my present publication to lay open.

To unravel this assertion which appears so problematical, it will be necessary to exhibit the line of conduct which has been invariably pursued by the Company for many years past. They do not, I am well assured, entertain the least doubt, but if the country they possess was properly explored by persons of ability, valuable discoveries might be made; but this they think may be so far from redounding to their interest, that it might have a contrary effect, by encouraging adventurers to petition for liberty to partake of these discoveries, and thereby occasion an investigation to take place, which would probably shake the foundation of their charter. This is not all; as their Company consists at present but of seven persons; this small number wisely think, that so long as they can share a comfortable dividend, there is no occasion for their embarking in additional expences, in order to prosecute discoveries which might transpire to the world, and endanger the whole.

Nothing is more clear to me than that these gentlemen follow their trade to Hudson's Bay, without any legal authority from the three estates of the realm. The act of Parliament which made them a Company *for seven years only*, has long since expired, and from that period it has never been renewed. But even supposing their first and only charter, granted by King Charles the Second, was intended to incorporate them for ever, they have undoubtedly forfeited every just pretension they could draw from thence, by the ill use they have made of this royal favour.

The limits of the Bay and Straits (as before observed) comprize a very considerable extent; the soil of which, in many parts, is capable of much improvement, by agriculture and industry. The countries abound with most kinds of Quadrupeds, &c. whose skins are of great value. The numerous inland rivers, lakes, &c. produce fish of almost every species; and in the seas in and about the Straits, and the Northern parts of the Bay, white and black whales, sea-horses, bears, and seals, are killed in great numbers

by the Esquimaux; whose implements for this purpose are exceedingly simple. What advantage might not then arise to the nation from this branch of the trade alone, were it laid open! If able harpooners were sent on this employ, with proper assistants, I will venture to say, that greater profits would accrue from this fishery, than from all the peltry at present imported by the Company. The discovery of numberless fine harbours, and an acquaintance with the surrounding country, which at present is entirely unknown to us, would, in all likelihood, be the consequence of these seas being more frequented than they are.

If it be objected to this, that the vast quantities of ice in the Straits must impede a vessel from making discoveries; I answer, that many years the ice is so insignificant in quantity as not to obstruct the passage of the ships in the least; and in those seasons when it is thickest, it is dissolved and dispersed in the ocean long before the return of the ships in September.

Even in the very confined manner in which the Company carry on this trade, it is far from being inconsiderable, though their ships seldom stop but a very short time for the purpose of trading with the Esquimaux; and it frequently happens, that by reason of foggy or windy weather, those people are prevented from coming down to the ships, and consequently the trade is lost for that year; for none of them are seen by the English on their return to Europe. The articles which the Company receive from the Esquimaux are, whale-bone, seal-skins, ivory, and oil, for which they exchange darts, spears, knives, and even old nails and iron hoops; but as oil constitutes a principal part of the food of these savages, they are not very forward in offering it to sale.

I hope that what I have advanced on this subject, will be sufficiently convincing to every unprejudiced and impartial person, that the Company have not made such efforts in these territories for the good of the nation, as they were by their original

Charter required to do; and I here beg leave to repeat, that uninfluenced by prejudice, or actuated by interested views, I have no prospect but the good of my country, which is very sensibly wounded by every restraint that is laid on its commerce.

Having thus pointed out some of the means by which the Trade to this country might be improved, I shall proceed to consider how far those inland regions, which are comprehended in the general denomination of Hudson's Bay, are improveable.

It is very well known, to those who have any acquaintance with this service, that before the Canadian Merchants penetrated into the interior parts of Hudson's Bay, the Company never allowed their servants to go inland for fear a private trade should be carried on by them with the natives. Indeed, there was no necessity for these peregrinations, by a people, who, for obvious reasons, wished to confine themselves to the edge of the sea; as the Indians used annually to come down from the interior country to barter their furs at the Settlements. But since the Canadian Merchants have taken this step, the Company have been under the necessity of following their example, or tamely suffering the whole of the Fur Trade to fall into their hands. So languid, however, have been their efforts hitherto for this purpose, that their opponents have found no impediment arise from their exertions, though, as already observed, they are obliged to transport their merchandize to a much greater distance.

When we recollect that this country has been in the hands of an incorporated Company for upwards of one hundred and thirteen years; and compare the few discoveries that have been made during that period with those made in other parts;—when we reflect how little we are acquainted with its soil or productions, and how ignorant we are with respect to its capability of improvement;—when we further consider that no care has been taken to cultivate a reciprocal friendship with remote nations of Indians; but on the contrary, that those we are already acquainted

with have been vitiated by the introduction of spirituous liquors, and disgusted by ill-usage; such reflections naturally excite in the bosom of every one that has the good of their country at heart, a wish that so extensive and improveable a country were in the possession of those who would take more pains to render it more beneficial to the mother country.

The inland parts produce wild rice and Indian corn; and when our people have sown any of the seed of these, it has come up as promising as in the cultivated gardens of Canada. The animals of this extensive inland country are buffaloes in great numbers, goats, wild horses, moose, and different species of deer. Those of the carnivorous kind are wolves, wild cats, wolverins, badgers, bears, beavers, otters, &c. &c. Every sort of fish, of the most delicious flavour, are likewise found in the rivers and lakes.

The Indians, being a most indolent people, and as devoid of curiosity as the Lords of the Soil, the country may lay unexplored, uncultivated, and unknown, to eternity, without the interposition of some virtuous members of the community, who shall have patriotism enough to adopt, and influence sufficient to carry into execution, such plans as may be thought most adviseable for extending the trade, and thereby augmenting the expenditure of the manufactures of Great Britain.

If we look into history we shall find, that since the discovery of this country, uninhabited States have grown populous, uncultivated regions have been made fertile, and colonies, unknown at that time, have become independent and flourishing. But this country, and this country alone, seems neglected and forgotten; for though it has been known to us for upwards of a hundred years, it is almost in as rude and unimproved a state as the forlorn and inhospitable climes which surround the Poles.

With humble submission to the superior judgment of the respectable set of Gentlemen who preside over this country, it appears to me highly probable, that if they had settled posts at convenient distances in the interior parts to the Westward, the

event would not only have proved very lucrative to themselves, but to the kingdom; for it might have been the means of making alliances with powerful nations of Indians, even so far across the country as California; who would consequently at this day gratefully acknowledge the power and superiority of the British empire, and have made no inconsiderable addition to her commerce. But it answers the selfish ends of this Company to entertain different sentiments.

*Some Account of the Company's Officers in the Country, as well
the Governors, as inferior Servants*

The chief person in command at each Settlement is called the Governor of the Fort. Sometimes he has one to act under him, who is termed The Second. These, with the Surgeon and the master of the sloop, constitute a council, who are to deliberate together in all cases of emergency, or on all affairs of importance; such as the reading the Company's General Letter; inditing an answer to it; the encroachments of the Canadian traders; or the misbehaviour of the servants. In these Councils very little regard, however, is paid to the opinion of the subordinate members, who rather wish to obtain the Governor's smiles by acquiescence, than rouse his resentment by freely delivering opposite sentiments.

The Governors are appointed for either three or five years, and have from fifty to one hundred and fifty pounds per year, with a premium upon the trade, which fluctuates according to its rise or fall. These gentlemen generally reign as absolute in their petty commands as Eastern Nabobs; and the inferior servants are exceedingly diligent in cultivating their favour, as they have it in their power to make the lives of those who are under them as unhappy as they please; for it is out of any of the servants power to return home 'till the next arrival of the ships, and then if the dissatisfied person insists upon going, his unkind master takes care to send home such a character with him, as shall enable the Company to withhold his wages; the voice of an inferior servant being but of little avail, when opposed to that of the Governor and his Council.

While I resided in the Bay, I had an opportunity of being acquainted with many gentlemen in the station of Governors; and during that time could single out several whose affability

and capacity merited a better employment. Some have I known who despised servility and unworthy deeds; but this was only for a time, and while young in their stations. A continual course of power and uncontrouled command has made them absolute, and impatient to the asperity of contradiction.

I resided under two of these gentlemen⁹, each of whom had enjoyed the superior command for about thirty years; they resembled each other so much in their conceptions, in their dispositions, and in the general tenor of their deportment, that nature seemed to have cast them in the same mould; a proof that austerity is assuredly acquired by a series of absolute command.

Mr. Robson complains of a Governor at Churchill Fort, in his time, who had a thousand times rendered himself unworthy of society. His acquaintance with them was not, however, so general as mine has been. I have known a man not only despised in every part of the Bay for the inveteracy of his disposition, but his bad name had even extended across the Atlantic, and reached the Orkney Islands, the place from whence the Company usually hire their servants. Here the malevolency of his disposition was held in such abhorrence, that those people (as remarkable for their poverty as the honesty of their intentions) unanimously refused to visit the unblest spot where he resided.

The unconquerable turbulency of this gentleman's temper rendered his life a prey to remorse and corroding inquietude, which embittered his days, and made his time truly deplorable. Intoxication was his sole delight; and this must be gratified even at the expence of common prudence; for his propensity to inebriation was such, that at the time the French took York-Fort, having no common spirits at hand, he applied to the surgeon for spirits

⁹Umfreville was at first under Andrew Graham at Severn House from 1771 to 1775. Graham joined the Hudson's Bay Company as a writer in 1752, and retired in 1775. The second governor under whom he served was Humphrey Marten, at York Factory, from 1775 to 1782. For Humphrey Marten, see page 34.

of wine, which he drank to raise his courage. A truly noble courage it must be, to require so severe a stimulator.

As the Governor above referred to rendered himself so peculiarly hateful to all around him, and was besides so instrumental in reducing the Company's trade, he having driven the Indians away by his bad treatment of them; I hope I shall be excused for adding to what I have already said on so unworthy an object the following fact, which will further elucidate his character, and conclude my animadversions on it.

The Company engaged with a poor man to serve them in their settlements as a Taylor, at eight pounds per year. It was the peculiar misfortune of this industrious man, who had a large family, to be under the command of the above person, consequently his life was doomed to be a scene of uninterrupted anxiety. Such was the usage the poor man received, that he would not stay his contracted time out, but went home to his native country. From thence he wrote to the Company, representing in the most humiliating and affecting manner, the cruel treatment he had received from the Bay Governor; he informed them that the blows he had received would be the cause of unhappiness to him to the latest period of his life, as he was thereby unable to get a livelihood at his business; upon which account he humbly solicited a small consideration, to compensate in some measure for the injury he had undeservedly sustained in their service. Though it would have been an act of the greatest charity to have listened to the prayer of this poor man's petition, yet, so great is the partiality of the Company to their chief officers in the country, that no attention was paid to the petition; and, indeed, an inferior servant, may apply for redress till he is tired, before any notice will be taken of his complaints, or the slightest reprimand given to the authors of his misery.

When a Governor takes it into his head to have an aversion to any particular person under his command, he has so many ways in his power of rendering him miserable, that he will be

soon tired of his situation, and find his life too unhappy to be borne with any degree of equanimity and composure. Without a friend to console him, or to alleviate the hardships of adversity; without any scenes of amusement, or objects to divert the attention, and exhilarate the spirits; he will find that he drags on an uncomfortable existence, without tasting any of its enjoyments; that he lives in a state of indifference and anxiety; that his master, who is his enemy, has it in his power not only to blast his present peace of mind, but by his influence to hurt his character in future. Such is the life of a servant to this Company, who unguardedly falls under the displeasure of the Governor.

It may naturally be supposed, that those gentlemen whom the Company intrust with the charge of their Factories, are persons of some ingenuity; and if not endowed with a liberal education, yet that they can read, write, and understand common accounts. Though any person would conceive these qualifications as essentially necessary, yet the first person I served under was a remarkable instance of the contrary. This respectable personage was incapable of casting up a question in simple addition; the numerical figures were hardly known to him; nor could he intelligibly write his own name. His understanding likewise was, in every acceptation of the word, most contemptible; and yet this *worthy* member of society enjoyed the honourable appellation of one of the Hudson's Bay Company's Governors.

But notwithstanding the Gentlemen at home place so much reliance on their superior officers while in the country, the deference immediately vanishes when they arrive in London; for a Governor may attend the Hudson's Bay House, and walk about their Hall for a whole day, without the least notice being taken of his attendance. To exemplify this fact, I shall mention an instance that happened within my own knowledge; and to a person who was not of the above description.

A gentleman of tried probity, who had served the Company with remarkable fidelity and success for upwards of seventeen

years, came home in 1782, with a view to spend the remainder of his days in his native country, and to enjoy himself a little, after a long and painful servitude. Upon his arrival he was in hopes at least to be introduced to the Gentlemen he had served so long, and to find his conduct approved by those who had reaped the fruits of his industry; but this small favour was denied him; and he went into the country, without finding these reasonable expectations gratified; nor could he be very well pleased with the supercilious conduct of his late masters.

The labouring servants, as before observed, are all procured from the Orkney Islands, at the rate of six pounds per year; the Captains of the ships engage them, and, if possible, for five years. Each servant signs a contract on his entrance into the service, but he is not allowed to have a copy of it, for fear the secrets of the Company should gain admittance into the world; so that as it contains a deal of matter, and the servant probably cannot read, it is impossible for him to know the substance of his agreement one day afterwards.

In this contract he is bound to serve for three, four, or five years, and not to return home until this term is expired, unless recalled by the Company. He engages during his return home, though no seafaring-man, to do the duty of watch and ward on board the ship in which he returns, and that without any pay for the same. He is further bound, in the most solemn manner, not to detain, secret, harbour, or possess any skin, or part of a skin, on any pretence whatever; but on the contrary, he is to search after, and detect all persons that may be disposed to engage in this species of speculation. On detecting any such he is to expose their persons, and inform the Governor of their breach of contract; but if contrary to their agreement, any person should be found hardy enough to conceal any kind of peltry, or infringe his contract in the smallest degree, he or they so offending are not only to forfeit all the wages that may be due to them, but are to pay to the Governor and Company two years pay, or the

amount thereof; though all this may be done quite unknowingly by the most faithful servant, unless forwarned of it by having a copy of his agreement.

When a servant's time is expired, and he is returning home, before he be permitted to go on board the ship, the Governor in person sees that every thing is taken out of his chest, and even his bed examined, for fear it should contain any private trade. The same circumspection is used when a person writes to his friends in England for a few necessaries which he cannot well do without. In this case the box, or package, in which his things are inclosed must first be sent to the Hudson's Bay House, and undergo a careful examination, for fear it should contain any thing used in private trade; and I have known more instances than one or two, where a servant has been refused a few shirts and stockings, for fear they should be converted to this use.

An acquaintance of mine had his box lost at the House of the Company, through the negligence of the clerks. After it had passed the usual examination, it was allowed to be shipped and sent out. When the owner found it did not arrive, having sufficient proof of its being lost under their roof, he wrote a submissive letter to the Company, requesting an indemnification for his loss: but so far was he from having this reasonable request complied with, that one of the gentlemen at the board made the following significant remark on his letter; "Damn the fellow, does he think that we want to wear his clothes." An observation that would have done little honour to a fish porter within the purlieus of Billingsgate.

During the time any Indians may be at the Settlements trading with their furs, the Factory gates are kept continually shut; and it is the employment of one person to watch that no one goes out, for fear he should carry on a private trade with the Indians: so that all the servants in the Forts sometimes remain imprisoned like birds in a cage, for a week together; and even if a person wishes to take a walk on a Sunday afternoon, when

there are no natives trading, he must first go to the Governor, and humbly supplicate his permission, before he can walk one quarter of a mile in order to recreate himself.

The provisions allowed the servants are, taken altogether, but of the middling kind; some of it is very good wholesome food, and other kinds of it are of so bad a quality, as scarce to be digestive on a canine stomach. Great quantities of venison and geese are salted for the use of the Factories during the spring and fall of the year. This provision will sometimes remain three or four years in the casks unopened; after which it becomes so compleatly putrified, rancid, and devoid of taste, that a person might as well expect nutriment from the shavings in a carpenter's shop. So disgusted are the servants at it when it arrives at this state, that by way of contempt they term it "salted horse flesh."

Among such a variety of complaints justly instituted against the Company, and those who act under their directions, I am happy to have it in my power to mention one particular in which they merit commendation; and this is the moderate price they fix on some European commodities, which they sell to their servants; who, as they have such low wages, would not otherwise be able to furnish themselves with necessary conveniences for the climate. The following articles are thus rated:

Brass Kettles, 2s. 6d. per lb.—Soap, 1s. 6d. ditto.—Sewing twine, 1s. 6d. ditto.—Tobacco, leaf, 1s. 6d. ditto.—Tobacco, English roll, 3s. 6d. ditto.—Cloth, 6s. 6d. per yard.—Duffels, 4s. ditto.—Flannel, 1s. 6d. ditto.—Guns, 30s. each.—Shirts, 4s. 6d. each.—Blankets, 8s. each.—Shoes, 5s. 6d. per pair.—Stockings, 3s. per pair.—Writing paper, 1s. per quire.—English Brandy, 5s. per gallon, &c.

The chief employments of the inferior servants in the settlements, is carrying logs of wood, walking in snow-shoes, sledging the snow out of the Factory avenues, and hunting; and notwithstanding the inconveniences before recited, after a person has

been a few years in the service, he generally imbibes a love for the country, unless discouraged by the bad usage of his superiors.

The hunting part of his duty he generally follows with pleasure and avidity; besides the recreation he receives from the sport on those excursions, he takes delight in being from the Factory during them, as then he becomes his own master, and is free from inspection of a too watchful overseer. Notwithstanding the customs of this country, as at present established, are rather forbidding, and seem to discourage us from wishing to live in so frigid a clime, yet, as already observed, though cold, it is exceeding healthy; and there have been many who have lived here several years not only comfortably, but happy; and have enjoyed a better state of health perhaps than they would have done in a less inhospitable country.

I cannot leave this subject without representing the lost state a youth is in, who is unfortunate enough to be bound apprentice to the Hudson's Bay Company.—The unfortunate young man is perhaps the only son of a tender and affectionate parent, who, thinking to forward the happiness of his child, articles him to this Company for seven years: I have known an instance where a boy has been bound for fourteen years.

On his arrival in the country, he knows nobody. His masters who sent him out, and to whom he is to look for support, are now many hundreds of miles distant. The Governor is quite indifferent about him, he having servants of his own. The consequence of this is, the boy associates with the common men, forms connections with them, and becomes habituated to their customs, which his tender years are not able to guard against. The education given him by his parents is now soon obliterated; he imbibes fresh vices daily; contracts a love for smoking, drinking, and swearing; and in a word, becomes a reprobate. His employment consists in cleaning the Governor's knives and shoes, running on errands for the cook, and cutting down and carrying heavy

logs of wood, much beyond his years and strength. In the mean time, no care is taken to inculcate the precepts of religion and virtue in his mind, or even preserve those principles and knowledge he may have brought in the country. Every step that would make him a man fit for the world, and a useful member of society, is totally neglected.

I would ask the Hudson's Bay Company what an apprentice of their's is fit for, after having served them for seven or fourteen years? whether he has obtained a knowledge of any art of business that will enable him to get a creditable living in the world, or to support himself when the strength and vigour of youth are exhausted?—I will defy them to point out any, that has been thus acquired; as his constant employment has consisted of every species of drudgery and subordinate labour: so that on his returning home, his indulgent parents, instead of finding him instructed in anything that is praise-worthy, are lamentably convinced, that he is a proficient in nothing but idleness, swearing, and debauchery.

It may be argued by the abettors of the Company, (if they have any) that after the period of the apprentice's indentures is expired, he has an opportunity of rising in their service, if by good behaviour he has merited so much favour; that from his apprenticeship, he may be made a writer at 15*l.* per year, from thence be raised to an assistant at 25*l.* per year, afterwards a second at 40*l.* per year; and from thence to the exalted station of a Governor, at 150*l.* per year. To this I would reply, that I am enabled to say, from the eleven years service which I passed through in their employ, that the prospect of ascending this important ladder is very faint indeed. But even allowing the youth to be fortunate enough, by assiduity or favour, to succeed to promotion in this service, he is not even then exempt from labour and menial duty; for every person in the Factories, except the Governor and surgeon, must occasionally go to hard work;

and should he object to this usage, and beg for milder employment, in the most submissive terms, it will have no effect on the Governor, who in all probability, will not only increase the difficulties of the complainant, by every series of severe treatment, but send him home to the Company with a bad character; representing that he is unfit for their service, having refused his duty.

Such is the usual progress of the servitude of their apprentices; and so little is the probability of the young men reaping any advantage from it.

ACCOUNT of the Taking of the Hudson's Bay Settlements by the
French in 1782

It being so nearly connected with the subject I am upon, I shall subjoin the following account of the taking of the Hudson's Bay Company's settlements by the French¹⁰, as it was published in the Morning Chronicle of April 1783.

*To the Editor of the Morning Chronicle
and Daily Advertiser*

SIR,

York Fort.

As I have not observed in any of the news-papers an account of the capture of the Hudson's Bay Company's settlements, except a translation of Mons. La Perouse's letter to the French Marine Minister, I am induced to lay before the public the following facts, founded upon truth, and recorded by my own experience.

The first notice we had of an enemy's being on the coast, was on the 20th of August, 1782, in the evening, at which time the Company's ship was lying in the roads, and had been there five days, without having the least intimation of this event, although Mons. La Perouse, by his own account, had been sounding Port Nelson river on the 18th. The next day, August 21, the weather being extremely fine and calm, it afforded the enemy an opportunity to land their men with safety, which they attempted in fourteen boats, provided with mortars, cannon, scaling ladders, and about three hundred men, exclusive of marines.

Our number of men consisted of sixty English and twelve Indians, who behaved extremely well to us, and evinced their regard to us by every exertion in their power. The defence of York Fort consisted of thirteen cannon, twelve and nine pounders, which formed a half-moon battery in the front of the Factory; but

¹⁰This was the capture of York Factory and Fort Prince of Wales in 1782 by a fleet of three vessels commanded by Admiral La Pérouse. For a French account of the capture, see "Expédition de la Baie d'Hudson: Extrait du Journal de Pierre-Bruno-Jean de la Mouneraye" (Bulletin de la Société de Géographie, 7 ser., 1888).

it being thought probably that the enemy might come in the night, and turn these guns against us, they were overset to prevent the French from taking this advantage. On the ramparts were twelve swivel guns mounted on carriages, which might have annoyed the enemy in the most effectual manner. Every kind of small arms were in plenty and good condition within the Fort. We had likewise ammunition in great store, and the people seemed to be under no apprehension. A fine rivulet of fresh water ran within the stockadoes; there were also about thirty head of cattle, and as many hogs, with a great quantity of salt provisions of different kinds.

Aug. 22. Two Indian scouts were sent to obtain intelligence; who returned in about three hours, and gave it as their opinion, that the enemy must be nigh at hand, as they heard several guns fired in the vicinity of the Fort. About sun set we could plainly discern a large fire behind us, about a mile and a half distant, kindled by the French, as we supposed to refresh themselves before their attack the next day.

Aug. 23. It was observed at day light, that the Company's ship had taken the advantage of a fine breeze at S.W. and prudently shaped her course for England, unperceived by the enemy. About 10 o'clock this morning the enemy appeared before our gates; during their approach a most inviting opportunity offered itself to be revenged on our invaders, by discharging the guns on the ramparts, which must have done great execution; but a kind of tepid stupefaction seemed to take possession of the Governor at this time of trial, and he peremporarily declared that he would shoot the first man who offered to fire a gun. Accordingly, as the place was not to be defended, he, resolving to be beforehand with the French, held out a white flag with his own hand, which was answered by the French officer's shewing his pocket-handkerchief.

Under the sanction of this flag of truce, a parley took place, when the Governor received a summons wrote in English. In this summons two hours were granted to consult about our situation; but this indulgence was made no use of, and the place was most ingloriously given up in about ten minutes, without one officer being consulted, or a council assembled; so that this Fort, which might have withstood the united efforts of double the number of those by which it was assailed, in an attack with small arms, was surrendered to a half-starved wretched group of Frenchmen, worn out with fatigue and hard labour, in a country they were entire strangers to. From the nature of their attack by the way of Port Nelson River, they could not use their mortars or artillery,

the ground being very bad, and interspersed with woods, thickets, and bogs, by which they were so roughly handled in the course of their march, that I verily believe they had not fifty pair of shoes in their whole army. The difficulties of their march must appear very conspicuous, when it is considered, they were a whole day in marching seven miles.

On the whole, I cannot help thinking, that if the place had been commanded by a person of resolution and good conduct, and one who had his country's good at heart, it might have been defended against an attack with musquetry.

When it is considered that the enemy's ships lay at least twenty miles from the Factory, in a boisterous sea, at a dangerous time of the year, and consequently could not co-operate with their troops on shore, but with the greatest difficulty and uncertainty; and even this depended solely on propitious winds and weather:—when it is further considered, that their troops could receive no supplies but what came from the ships; and the cold, hunger, and fatigue, which had taken possession of their bodies, was hourly working in our favour:—when it is likewise considered, that the Factory was not in want of any one article which would enable it to withstand an attack with musquetry; and that the people shewed no sign of fear, dismay, or dejection, but quite the reverse:—I say, when all these material circumstances shall be considered by the impartial reader, he would undoubtedly look with indignation on the pusillanimity of the English Governor, who, with all these advantages on his side, surrendered without firing a gun. The poor Indians were so affected at our captivity, that they expressed their sorrow by sighs and tears.

Whatever opinion the French might entertain of us on account of our timidity, it is but justice to say, that they behaved to their easy acquired prisoners, with that politeness which is peculiar to their nation. Mons. Le Perouse, the commander of *Le Sceptre*, was an honour to his nation, and an ornament to human nature. His politeness, humanity, and goodness, secured him the affection of all the Company's officers; and on parting, at the mouth of Hudson's straits, they felt the same sensation which the dearest friends feel in an interview preceding a long separation. His humane disposition was more particularly conspicuous in leaving a repository of ammunition, &c., for the poor Indians, who otherwise must have experienced great inconveniences and distress.

Though the French sustained no loss from us during their attack of York Fort, yet, through the severity of the climate, and their own inexperience, they lost five large boats, a considerable

quantity of merchandize, and fifteen soldiers, who were drowned in Hay's river, after the place was surrendered.

The Company suffered great loss by the capture of this place; which had remained in their possession unmolested since the peace of Utrecht. The whole of the ship's outward bound cargo was entirely burnt and destroyed, together with a considerable quantity of provisions, stores &c. which had been collecting for about seventy years.

If the above account finds a place in your entertaining paper, I shall embrace the first opportunity of sending you an account of the capture of Prince of Wales Fort.

Churchill River.

MR. EDITOR,

According to my promise I now send you the account of the capture of Prince of Wales, or Churchill Fort, on the N.W. coast of Hudson's Bay, which I received from a gentleman, who was upon the spot at the time, and on whose veracity I can depend.

The French visited this place before York Fort, on account of its Northern situation, and the general prevalency of winds from that quarter, thinking to take the advantage of them in going to the Southward. Accordingly the three ships appeared before the Fort on August 8, 1782, at a time when the Governor¹¹ was very busy trading with some Indians who were just arrived: but the sight of such unexpected visitors did not fail to engage the attention of the Factory people, who were not used to see so many strangers in these seas.

At this time, which was about six o'clock in the evening, the enemy had cast anchor within five miles of the Fort, and in a little time afterwards appeared very industrious in sounding the river, even within musquet shot of the place; and I have heard the Governor declare, that their officers went about the Factory avenues, shooting birds, with the greatest indifference; a convincing proof that they did not conceive themselves to be in much danger. The Fort at this time mounted forty-two cannon, six, twelve, and twenty-four pounders, was provided with ammunition in great plenty, and the Factory was not in immediate want of provisions of any kind. The strength of the Fort itself was such as would have resisted the attacks of a more considerable force; it was built of the strongest materials, its walls were of great thickness, and very durable, it having been

¹¹The Governor of Fort Prince of Wales at this time was Samuel Hearne.

forty years in building, and attended with great expence to the Company. In short it was the opinion of every intelligent person, that it might have made an obstinate resistance when attacked, had it been as well provided in other respects; but through the impolitic conduct of the Company, every courageous exertion of their servants must have been considered as imprudent temerity; for this place, which would have required four hundred men for its defence, the Company, in their consummate wisdom, had garrisoned with only thirty-nine.

About three o'clock in the morning Aug. 9, the enemy began to disembark their troops, at a place called Hare-Point; from whence they marched in a regular manner towards the Factory, until they arrived within about four hundred yards, when they made a halt, and sent two officers from the main body, with a summons to the Governor to surrender the place. The Governor and two of his officers met them half way, when all difficulties that obstructed the negotiation were speedily overcome, to the satisfaction of both parties. In consequence of this verbal agreement, the French, to the amount of about four hundred men entered the Fort, at six o'clock in the morning when the British flag was lowered, and a table cloth from the Governor's table hoisted in its stead.

Every part now exhibited a scene of devastation and ruin; for the licentious soldiery, finding they were not restricted by a capitulation, began to plunder whatever came in their way. It must, however, at the same time be acknowledged, that the officers took every opportunity to depress this spirit in the common soldiers, with great humanity and address; politely sympathizing with the sufferers in the inevitable distresses attending the fortune of war. The remainder of this, and the following day, were spent in demolishing the works belonging to the fortifications, shipping on board sundry articles of stores, provisions, and a valuable quantity of peltry, which if the Company had received would have indemnified them for all their other losses conjointly.

On the 11th, the three ships set sail for York-Fort; but about five o'clock in the morning, a sail was observed apparently steering for Churchill, which was now in flames. One of the frigates were ordered to chase. The experience of her commander was, however, so inadequate to the task of coping with the skill of the English Captain, that if he had persevered he would probably have been led into such a labyrinth of shoal water and rocky ground, as might have made him repent his visit to Hudson's Bay. Accordingly the Frenchman gave up the

pursuit about seven o'clock in the evening, after firing a bow chace from an eighteen pounder, which he found had no other effect than, if possible, to make the Englishman go faster than before.

I would just remark, that Churchill Settlement was by much the best ever erected in Hudson's Bay. The Company usually have their Factories built with logs of pine, which are squared, and laid one upon another; but this building was entirely of free-stone; the artillery was in admirable condition; and the fortifications were most skilfully planned under the inspection of the ingenious Mr. Robson, who went out in 1742 for that purpose.

While the trade of the other settlements had been upon the decline for some years, this place had in general held its former medium, and of late years considerably increased. Notwithstanding the advantages of so flourishing a settlement to the Company, their extreme parsimony would not permit them to have above one man to a gun, even in the midst of a precarious war. What folly could be more egregious, than to erect a fort of such extent, strength, and expence, and only allow thirty-nine men to defend it? The force which the French sent into Hudson's Bay was more than sufficient to reduce every place in the country, weakly defended as they were. This place, in particular, with so few men, was totally incapable of withstanding the well-directed efforts of so strong an armament, especially as the depth of water in the river would admit the largest ships to lie very near the Fort; and bombs may be used with great effect.

Notwithstanding the Governor must have been sensible of his inability to make an obstinate defence, his conduct was in some respects highly reprehensible. In the first place, he should have sent an express to York Fort, over land, by the Indians, with information of an enemy's arrival. Had he done so, the people at that settlement would have had five days more at least to prepare themselves for so unexpected an event. Secondly, he should have destroyed the papers of the master of the sloop, who was then to the Northward upon a trading voyage. By the possession of these papers, the enemy acquired a complete description of York Fort, with an account of its weakness on the land side, which induced them to try their success that way. Thirdly, his timidity in quietly suffering a known enemy to be sounding the river, as it were, under his nose, without opposition, was not, I think I may venture to say, consistent with that fortitude which ought to actuate a Briton, in the service of his country.

REMARKS *and* OBSERVATIONS *made in the Inland Parts of*
HUDSON'S BAY *during Four Years Residence in those*
Unknown Regions

In June 1783, I landed at Quebec; and in May 1784, I left the city of Montreal, to penetrate into the interior parts. This we did in canoes made of birch-rind, of about four tons burthen each, and navigated by eight Canadians, who are, without doubt, the best qualified for this very laborious navigation, which is continually obstructed by shoals, rapids, and the most tremendous cataracts. In about one month we arrived at the falls of St. Mary, which form a junction of the lakes Superior and Huron.

As the fur merchants in Canada began to be alarmed this year, on account of the partition line established by the late peace, apprehending that the key of the interior country, situated on the bottom of lake Superior, would thereby fall within the American boundary, I was pitched upon to pursue an unknown tract in order to explore another passage into the interior country, independent of the old one known by the name of the Great Carrying Place¹². I accordingly sat out for that purpose, and succeeded in my expedition much to the satisfaction of the merchants; but as the Americans have not yet been able to obtain possession of those Western posts on the lakes, ceded to them by the late peace, the traders still continue the old route.

When the goods arrive at the Great Carrying Place, they are embarked in Canoes of smaller dimensions, the navigation being still more intricate; and here they meet the winterers who are returning with furs traded in the course of the preceding winter. Not less than one thousand Canadians and Europeans

¹²Commonly known as Grand Portage. This was the wilderness headquarters of the Nor'Westers until their headquarters were moved to Fort William in 1807.

are employed by the merchants in this business, who are incorporated under the firm of the North-West Company, besides perhaps as many more who go to Detroit on the fur trade, and return to Montreal with beaver skins, deer skins, &c. to a great amount. Upwards of four thousand packs are produced from the whole trade annually, which consumes a great quantity of British merchandize, of the most inferior quality, and which perhaps would hardly find a market elsewhere.

In the following remarks on the inland parts, a great similarity will be found between the Indians living on the coast of Hudson's Bay, and those inland, termed the Nehethawa Indians: in fact they were originally the same people, but as numbers have receded from the sea coast to partake of a more fruitful clime, they have suffered some alteration in their manners and customs.

Of the FACE of the COUNTRY, its SOIL, CLIMATE, and
NATURAL PRODUCTIONS

I passed the winters of the years 1784, 1785, 1786, and 1787, on a large river¹³, which empties itself by many branches into that lake which is laid down in maps by the name of lake Bourbon. This lake was improperly so called by the French, when in possession of Canada; but its real name is the Cedar lake, and it is thus named by the Indians, on account of that kind of wood being found thereon.

In the year 1787, when the following remarks were made, I winter'd in the computed latitude of 55 deg. N. and Latitude 120. deg. W. from the meridian of London. I cannot sufficiently lament the opportunity I have lost of giving to a certainty the geographical situation of the place, for the want of necessary instruments. As this cannot be repaired, I must endeavour to compensate for it by communicating such facts as have come to my knowledge, either thro' the channel of personal experience, or confidential information.

The course of the river was nearly east, and I wintered about seven hundred miles above its discharge into the cedar lake¹⁴. Its current is very regular, and in the whole distance, we have but one place where the passage is in the least impeded by rapids; and even this place is very trifling, and easily passed with proper care. Every part of this river, where the channel is wide, is much incommoded by sand banks and shoals. The shores and bed of it are muddy, and consequently the water is very dirty.

¹³The Saskatchewan River.

¹⁴Umfreville's post would appear to have been the most westerly post on the Saskatchewan at this time. It was about sixty miles below Fort Buckingham, which had been built by Mitchell Oman of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1780, but had been abandoned about 1782.

What I have often thought worthy of observation during my stay here, has been the very sudden and rapid rise of the water in the river during the summer months, and this without any apparent cause, or extraordinary rains. In the Summer of 1786 I observed the water to rise ten feet perpendicular in the space of twenty-four hours; thence it subsided gradually to its usual height; and then rapidly rose as before. This rising of the water drowns all the Country about the bottom of the river, where the banks are uncommonly low; and it frequently happens, that the people who navigate the traders canoes are obliged to sleep in them, for want of a place to put ashore.

This river has several kind of fish in it, and sturgeon in the spring of the year are in great plenty. Its distance above us is not known; but by Indian information, we learn, that it is formed from a great number of small rivers which issue from an extraordinary ridge of Rocks, called the Stony Mountain¹⁵.

This mountain is the most remarkable place in the country, and appears to be the barrier between the Indians that trade with us and those who trade with strangers on the other side. I have been told that it is seven days journey before you arrive at it. We are unacquainted with its extent at present, but it seems to have a North and South direction. It is said that all the rivers on the East side of the mountain have an easterly course, and those on the West side take a westerly course; the latter must evidently fall into the South seas.

About two hundred and seventy miles below where I wintered, or about four hundred and thirty miles from its mouth, two branches unite in one; of these one is called the South branch, and the other the North branch. As I am the best acquainted with the latter, I confine myself particularly to it in this description.

¹⁵The Rocky Mountains. It will be remembered that, when Umfreville was writing in 1790, no one had as yet succeeded in crossing the Rockies.

I must not omit one particular relating to this river, which is the great quantity of Coal conveyed down by the current. I am of opinion that abundance of this mineral must be in the country above us, as a person once brought me down a piece he had taken from the earth, where it was piled up in heaps. And it was in every respect similar to that brought to London from the North of England and Scotland. He told me that he asked the Indians the use of it; and on their expressing their ignorance, he put some of it in the fire which burnt violently to their great astonishment. However plenty it may be inland, it is certain there is no want of it near the river, from the great quantity left on the shoals. What other treasures may be concealed in this unknown repository, or what valuable ores may be intermixed with the coal, I will not take upon me to determine.

All the lower country near the river for a considerable distance, affords no other wood than willows, and a few small poplars. The land is exceeding marshy, and abounds with all kinds of aquatic birds in the spring and autumn. Higher up, the banks of the river are steeper, and pines become frequent, which are intermixed with a few insignificant elm and birch trees.

All these countries are well stored with moose, beavers, otters, &c. but the red deer, jumping deer, and buffalo, are not to be found till you are considerably higher up the river, where the country becomes more open, and so free from woods, that in many places scarce a sufficiency can be procured to make a temporary fire for travellers, who are obliged instead thereof to use buffalo dung. During the winter, distant journies become dangerous, as the tempestuous weather often raises snow drifts. Difficulties arising from these are not to be obviated by strangers, but the natives seldom meet with any accidents through these obstructions, their innate knowledge of the country guiding them unerringly to the spot they would wish to reach.

Many spacious lakes are to be found in the inland parts. Most of these abound with fish, especially when joined to a river; but the natives seldom or never look after them, and the greater part of those Indians who came to our settlements to trade, will neither eat fish, water-fowl, nor any amphibious animal.

How far the soil of this boundless country may be favourable to the culture of vegetables, I am not enabled to advance. Experiments, which should be our only guide to knowledge in these matters, never having been much made use of: but if the opinion of an unexperienced person, could be of any weight, I think I may venture to say, that many parts would admit of cultivation. The Hudson's Bay Company servants have tried Indian corn and barley, by way of experiment, which came to perfection; Potatoes, Turnips, Carrots, Radishes, Onions, etc., have been lately reared, and found as good as those in Canada; and indeed, in forming a comparison between the two countries the advantage seems to incline to the one I am describing. It is true we are situated a few degrees more to the Northward, and about fifty degrees to the Westward of Quebec, but in the four years experience I have had, I have not yet found a winter so severe, as one I passed near Montreal, where the weather is generally something milder than about Quebec. The cold sets in, and the river ice breaks up, much about the same time as it does there.

The fruits which spontaneously shoot up, are not in such great variety in the wildernesses of Canada, as in the country I am speaking of. The natives collect vast quantities of a kind of wild cherries¹⁶ and bring them in for sale. The Hudson's Bay people make an excellent beverage of them, which is grateful to the taste, and is an excellent antiscorbutic. Raspberries,

¹⁶Botanists I have consulted are at a loss to know to what fruit Umfreville here refers, unless it be the choke-cherry.

strawberries, currants, cranberries, and an infinity of other kinds which I know not the names of, are to be found every where. So that a person, without the help of ammunition, may in the summer season procure a very comfortable subsistence, were he bewildered, and alone. Should any one be in this situation, almost every pond of water would furnish him with eggs of ducks, etc., and every thicket with a satiety of delicious fruit.

In vallies and humid situations, the grass grows to a great height, which fattens our horses in a short time; but the buffalo usually makes choice of hilly, dry ground, to feed on, the blades of grass on which are small, short and tender. When a numerous herd of these animals stay any length of time in one place, the ground is absolutely barren there for the remainder of the season, the grass being eat off as close as if shaved with a knife.

It may not be amiss in this place, to mention something of the snakes and frogs, which take up their residence in the ponds of this country. These ponds become putrid after a long drought. The snakes are of a green colour, with longitudinal white lines from the head to the extremity of the tail. They are so very inoffensive, that the Indians frequently play with them, and will tie them in knots round their necks. Whether these reptiles, like the frogs, lie in a torpid state during the winter, I cannot say, but I have frequently found their skins dried by the sun, which were hollow, but in other respects they were complete.

The frogs resume their existence and faculties in the month of May; when the genial warmth of the sun invigorates them afresh. At this time they vent forth a most hideous croaking, day and night, and they are particularly chearful in rainy weather. The appearance of the frogs gives name to the month of May among the Nehethawa Indians.

The climate is very perceptibly milder here than in the parts on the sea coast. The snow is not half so deep, neither are the

hottest days in summer so sultry. On the other hand, the animals in the upper country are not so liberally supplied with warm cloathing, as those of the lower country. The martins and other peltries of course are not so valuable. Nature, who supplies all her children according to their several necessities, makes a wide difference in the covering of the brute creation, proportioning it to the severity of the weather they have to resist; even the partridge in the lower country is not neglected; his legs and feet being covered with feathers in the same manner as the body. If a man is frozen in the upper country, it is owing to his not having taken proper care of himself; whereas upon the sea coast, with every necessary precaution, a man will frequently have his nose, face, or finger-ends skinned.

The heavens, in cold winter nights, do not exhibit that luminous appearance, which, as before remarked, is observable on the sea coast; nor do the stars shine with that refulgent lustre. The *Aurora Borealis* is not so common nor so brilliant; the *Parhelia* and *Paraselenes* are less frequent. Fogs in the winter, are unknown; whereas upon the coast, the sun will be obscured for weeks together; and every tree, &c. to leeward, will be encrusted over with this unwholesome effluvia, which the cold converts into rime.

In short, the two countries will admit of no comparison: one is temperate and healthy, the land is dry, pleasant, and fertile in spontaneous productions, and the animal creation is various and excellent for the support of man: in it, a person who could live retired, might pass his days with ease, content, and felicity, and if he did not enjoy an uninterrupted state of health, it would not be the fault of the air he lived in.

On the other hand, the lower country is one endless bog, where the savage animals themselves are sometimes constantly swampt. The finest summer's day will begin with a scorching heat, and terminate with a cold easterly sea fog. The weather

usually incident to autumn and midsummer, is experienced in their different extremes during the short space of twelve hours. The inhabitants frequently fall a prey to the severity of the frost. The whole country furnishes but one species of quadruped fit for the support of man; and the Europeans are accursed with an afflicting epidemical disorder, which they very emphatically term the "The Country Distemper."

*Of the ANIMALS, &c. of this Country. A Description
of the BUFFALO, and BUFFALO POUND*

Of all the numerous tribes of quadrupeds in this extensive country, the Buffalo¹⁷ undoubtedly merits a primary description; not only on account of its being the most numerous, but likewise for the great utility every part of it might be converted to, if ever this tract should be established.

From the nose to the root of the tail, a full grown male is about ten feet long; the hair on the back is of a brown colour, but on the legs, neck, and head is inclinable to black; from the lower lip, to the breast, a tuft of hair hangs down about a foot long; on the hinder part of the neck is an exuberance of flesh, or hunch, which is esteemed the most delicious part of the animal, and which much augments an appearance that is at best most hideous.

The male Buffalo is exceedingly ferocious when wounded, especially in the copulating season, and frequently proves fatal to the Indians themselves. They herd together in those spacious plains, which it is probable extend to the South Seas. The female admits the male in July, and brings forth in the month of March or April following. The horns are black, curved inwards, and about a foot long; they sometimes fall off from the old females, but the males retain them to the last. The weight of a full grown male is about one thousand pounds English, and the flesh, at least of the cows, equally esteemed with our European beef. The old Bulls have no hair on them summer or winter, for which reason they seek the woods; yet are nevertheless sometimes frozen in severe seasons. Altogether, the Buffalo is of an appearance truly frightful; the Bulls in particular; which the

¹⁷The fullest account of the buffalo or bison is to be found in F. G. Roe, *The North American Buffalo* (Toronto, 1951).

great quantity of hair about the head, and the hunch contributes much to augment.

Should this inland country ever be established, and manufacturers settled therein, every part of this animal would turn to account: as for tallow, hides, hair, horns and hoofs. They might also be tamed to the plough; and that with the greatest facility, by taking them young in the month of April or May, which a man who is swift of foot may do without the assistance of a horse.

The BUFFALO POUND

The Indians have various ways of killing the Buffalo; one of which is by cautiously approaching them when feeding. The hunter upon this occasion lies on his belly, and will sometimes fire his gun forty or fifty times without raising the herd. They also pursue them on horseback, and shoot them with arrows and guns. But the means by which the greatest numbers are taken, is by making a pound, which is constructed in the following manner:

They are either of a circular or square form, and differ according to the manner of the nation by whom they are made. The square ones are composed of trees laid on one another, to the height of about five feet, and about fifty on each side of the square. On that side at which the animals are intended to enter, a quantity of earth is laid, to the height of the construction, so as to form a hill of an easy ascent of about twenty feet. This done, a number of branches of trees are placed, from each side of the front, in a strait line from the raised hill, for about one hundred feet in length, continually increasing in width, so that though the inward ends of these lines of branches are no more than fifty feet asunder, the exterior end will exceed two hundred feet. After this, a number of poles, nearly fifteen feet long each, are placed at about twelve feet distance from each other, with a piece of Buffalo dung on the top, and in a strait line from the boughs above mentioned. At the foot of each pole a man lies concealed in a Buffalo skin, to keep the animals in a strait direction to the pound. These poles are placed alike on each side, always increasing in breadth from one side to the other,

and decreasing in the same proportion as the animals approach the pound. Every preparation being now made, three or four men set off on foot to find a herd of Cows; for the Bulls they think not worth their trouble. These they drive easily along, till they arrive within the vicinity of the pound, when one man is dispatched to give notice to the other Indians, who immediately assemble on horse back on each side of the herd, keeping a proper distance, for fear of frightening the animals. By this means they are conducted within the exterior line of poles. It frequently happens that they will endeavour to go out; to prevent which, the men who are placed at the foot of each pole, shake their skins, which drives the herd to the opposite side, where the others do the same: so that at last they arrive at the pound, and fall in headlong one upon another, some breaking their necks, backs, &c. And now the confusion becomes so great within, that though the height of the building shall not exceed five feet, none will make their escape. To elucidate this description of the Buffalo-Pound, I have roughly sketched the annexed diagram¹⁸.

The MOOSE

This animal is numerous, according to the situation of places they frequent; and mountainous land is usually made choice of by them. The hair is inclinable to black. The full-grown Moose, is about the size of a large horse, with lofty palmated horns, which fall off in December or January. They engender in the month of September or October, bring forth in May, and have from one to three at a birth. The Moose eats no grass, and subsists chiefly on the young branches of willows and poplars. They are not very plenty in the parts I have described, and it is but seldom that above two are met with in one place. The meat of the Moose is justly esteemed for its excellence.

The RED DEER

The Red Deer is next in size to the Moose, but it is not equal to it in its delicious flavour, on account of the peculiar quality

¹⁸See frontispiece.

in the fat, which turns cold so very fast, that a person must eat it the instant it is taken from the fire; and even then the mouth is sometimes lined with a grease of the consistence of tallow. The hair is of a reddish colour. The rose buds are much esteemed by the Red Deer, which, with young willows, poplars, and grass, constitute its food. The female receives the male, and brings forth at the same time with the Moose, and produces one and sometimes two at a time. The horns are not palmated like that animal, but are round, branched and lofty, and fall off in March. These animals are very numerous in most parts of the country, and they associate in herds; it is not uncommon to find five or six hundred in a place, but they are not to be met with in the open spacious plains where the Buffalos resort.

JUMPING DEER

This animal, though not half the size, of the Red Deer, is not the smallest of the species. The one under description receives its name from the singular manner of its course; this is by a continual succession of jumps, which they perform with amazing celerity, springing at the distance of fifteen or sixteen feet at each jump. It is a small clean-made animal, exceeding lively and gay, and is of a brown colour intermixed with grey hairs. Its food consists of grass, of the fallen leaves of the poplar, the young branches of different kinds of trees, and the moss adhering to the pines. The horns are about two feet long, and resemble those of the preceding animal, except in size; they fall off in the month of April. This handsome animal ruts in November, brings forth in May, and has one and sometimes two at a birth. It is needless to add that the flesh is delicious. There are two kinds of the Jumping Deer, one of which has a very short tail like the rest of the species, whereas the other kind has a tail about a foot long, and covered with red hairs.

APIS-TO-CHIK-O-SHISH

I am not sufficiently conversant in the science of Zoology to give this beautiful animal its proper name in the English language¹⁹; perhaps it has never yet been described in natural history. The French people resident in these parts, call it the CU BLANC, from a white mark on its rump. A more beautiful creature is not to be found in this or perhaps any other country. Extreme delicacy of make, and exact similarity of proportion, are observable in all its parts. No animal here is so swift of foot: not the fleetest horse or dog can approach it. They herd together in large droves, but sometimes three or four only are found in a place. Its horns are not ossified like the other species, nor are they branched. Both male and female have them, but they never fall off: they resemble more the horns of the Goat than those of the Deer species. They feed upon most kinds of grass, and the tender twigs of trees. The whole length may be about four feet and a half; the legs are white and slender; the rest of the body of a light red, with a white space on the rump.

At the Stony Mountain and parts adjacent, other cornuted animals are found which are entirely unknown to us here. People that I have conversed with on this subject, who have been there, describe a kind of Goat; and also an animal which resembles our Sheep, the horns of the male of which bear a great similarity to those of the Ram. I have seen large ladles made of these horns, some of which would contain two quarts of water. Without doubt, if the inland parts were explored by a person of ingenuity, many useful discoveries might be made in every branch of Nature's operations, as well relating to the vegetable as the animal world; but unfortunately those mercantile gentlemen who have hitherto been sent into this Terra incognita have been so very intent upon the pecuniary emolument, arising from the

¹⁹This would appear to be the American Pronghorn Antelope (*Antilocapra Americana* Ord.).

trade they are engaged in, as intirely to neglect every effort to obtain a knowledge of the country and its productions; though such an undertaking would be attended with little or no expense, and would certainly redound much to their honour, if not to their profit.

Having given a brief account of such of the four-footed tribe as contribute to the support of the inhabitants of the country, it will be necessary to mention the carnivorous animals to be met with; as also the amphibious ones. Under the former head we have Bears, two species of Wolves, Lynxes, Foxes, Wolverins, &c. but as these have frequently been very particularly described, I shall give but a concise account of each, viz.

BEARS are of three kinds;—the black, the red, and the grizzle Bear. The former is the least offensive, and, when taken young, the most docile and susceptible of kind usage. As to the other kinds, their nature is savage and ferocious, their power is dangerous, and their haunts to be guarded against. The numbers of maimed Indians, to be seen in this country, exhibit a melancholy proof of their power over the human species. A Canadian, last summer had his arm lacerated in a dreadful manner by one of these destructive animals: yet if a man is mounted upon a good horse, he may attack one with success; nor will they always fall on a person unprovoked. They feed upon berries, roots and flesh. In summer they travel about, but in winter they live in a state of inanimation in some recess under ground, and sustain nature by sucking their paws.

WOLVES are exceedingly numerous in this inland country; where they find a plentiful subsistence from the carcasses of wounded Buffalos, and others which are left and killed by the natives. They are taken in traps and snares. The Indians likewise shoot them in the following manner: A Buffalo being killed, and cut in pieces over night, the Indians appear at the place the next morning on horseback, where they find the Wolves so over-gorged with eating, as to be incapable of retreating, so that

they become an easy prey to the hunters. The Wolf is very voracious, and will consume an enormous quantity of food in a short time; but then he will go a considerable time without any kind of subsistence whatever. The skin becomes in season about the beginning of December; and the winter hair begins to fall off about the latter end of March, after the season of copulation is over. They are not so large as those found on the sea shore at Hudson's Bay, nor are their skins so well covered with a warm fur. The Wolves are possessed of much cunning and address in procuring food: in particular they will chace the Red Deer in a direct course to a precipice, when that creature being on full speed, and not foreseeing its danger, falls down with great force, and is inevitably killed, or prevented from making his escape.

LYNXES are sometimes met with in the upper country, but so rarely that I cannot with any propriety rank it among the quadruped inhabitants of it.

FOXES are not found here in such plenty or variety as on the sea coast, and it is needless to add, that the fur is of an inferior quality. There is a species of small Red Foxes here which is not an inhabitant of these frigid regions. They subsist on mice, and any kind of carrion which the sagacity of their smell may guide them to. The fœcundity of the Fox is remarkable, notwithstanding which, they are not common.

WOLVERINS are scarce in these parts. This beast is as much addicted to peculation and cunning as any of the carnivorous animals whatever. He chooses rather to attempt the destruction of the trap than to enter into it. No Indian hoards of provisions are secure from his discovery. He ascends trees with the greatest facility; and if he is not able to destroy the whole of the repository, he will hide the rest in as many places as there are pieces in the hoard.

I just mention these animals, rather to signify that they are natives of this country, than to attempt a description of them,

which is already well known. For the same reason it is necessary to add, that the Fisher, Martin, Mink, Badger, American and Alpine Hares, Ground and Wood Squirrels, Ermines, Musk Rats, &c. are found here.

The amphibious animals are Beavers and Otters. The ingenuity of the former in building their houses, stopping the current of rapid Creeks, and felling large trees, cannot be sufficiently admired. The Beaver is of a very docile disposition, and when taken young and properly brought up, may be made to discover a very faithful and affectionate regard for his keeper. I once possessed a young male which, after a month's keeping, would follow me about like a dog; and when I had been absent from him for a couple of hours, he would shew as much joy at my return as one of the canine species could possibly do. It was embarked on board a ship in Hudson's Bay, and arrived in England; but was soon after killed by an Esquimaux dog, which was likewise sent home as a curiosity.

BIRDS local and migratory

Those who winter with us, are a few species of the Hawk and Owl genus, the Butcher-bird, the Magpye, and Raven, the Pheasant and two kinds of Partridges: but where I wintered we had not any of the Ptarmigans which are so numerous on the sea-coast of Hudson's Bay. A few of them are however to be found more to the southward, though of a diminutive size.

The country being so well stored with animals of the larger kind, to supply its inhabitants with food, it is but seldom the feathered game are disturbed. Norwithstanding which they are far from being numerous: and what is very remarkable, and exhibits at once the fostering hand of the God of nature, is—That in those parts of the country, where the larger animals are the most rare, Partridges, Rabbits, &c. are in the greatest plenty;

whereas in those parts where the Moose, Deer and Buffalo are innumerable, scarce any are to be found.

In the month of April birds of passage begin to visit these countries. Of the migratory tribe the Eagle is the first seen, and from which the month of March takes its name among the Ne-heth-aw-a Indians.

There are two species of swans. Geese are in all the variety to be found in any other country; as the large Grey-goose, Canada Geese, Snow Geese, Laughing Geese, &c. Ducks, Loons, and every other kind of aquatic birds that are to be met with in America, are likewise found here.

An ornithological description of these different species would not only intrude upon my daily avocations, but is an undertaking to which I candidly acknowledge my abilities are not adequate. All I have proposed to myself in committing these remarks to paper, is to inform those who wish to be informed, that the inland parts of Hudson's Bay is a fine country;—is amply supplied by Nature with most things sufficient for the support of man and beast, either in a wandering or settled state,—and that it is a part of the world which has long, too long, been neglected by those whose duty to their country, ought to have urged them to explore it. If this had been done, manifold would have been the advantages which would have resulted from their laudable researches. Had this been done, the distance to the southern ocean long e're this might have been ascertained;—alliances have been formed with unknown nations of Indians;—the productions of the country been known;—and perhaps the certainty of a north-west passage developed.

Among the birds of passage, who visit us in the spring are many of the small vocal kind; which for beauty and diversity of plumage, and the sweetness of their notes, may vie with those of more hospitable climes. Many of these little songsters I have never seen any where else. I believe we have several nondescripts,

and perhaps some which are peculiar to this country in the summer. Among the rarely-found birds here, the Humming Bird deserves a place.

FISH

All the fish we were able to procure in the winter were caught in the lakes, but in the spring of the year, the river is known to abound with exquisite Sturgeon. Those taken in the lakes were Jack, Guiniads, Perch, and a very bony fish termed by the English in these parts a sucker; all which are excellent in their kinds. The method of fishing in the winter season, when nature is bound up by the durable chains of intense frost, is by letting down a net under the ice, which is done without much difficulty, even though the ice should be six feet thick. An excellent fish in taste, and in appearance much like a Herring, was caught in the river with a hook and line in great numbers²⁰. On the whole, fish are not so numerous in the inland parts, as in those waters which join to the sea: however, if the finny creation are scarce, nature has made up for this deficiency by supplying a redundancy of the larger animals, which furnish both food and raiment for the inhabitants of the country.

²⁰The reference here is no doubt to the whitefish.

Of the INDIANS, their Customs, &c.

The Indians who come to our Trading-houses in the parts before described, are the only ones we have any acquaintance with, and even our knowledge of these, it must be owned, is very imperfect. Those who have hitherto resided here, have been too much actuated by the impetuous desire of accumulating wealth, to allot a small portion of their time to the advancement of useful knowledge, and indeed, to speak the truth, I have not yet met with one who had any more ingenuity than inclination to apply himself to a subject which had no immediate prospect of advancing his pecuniary concerns.

On the other, or western side of the Stony Mountain are many nations of Indians, utterly unknown to us, except by Indian information, which we cannot enough rely on to justify us in advancing for facts, what may, perchance, be founded in error and misrepresentation. All I can say for certainty is, that a principal nation of these Indians is known to us by the name of the Snake Indians. That all the other Indians we have received an account of go to war against them every summer. In these war excursions many female slaves are taken, who are sold to the Canadian traders, and taken down to Canada; contrary to the maxims of the Hudson's Bay people, who never buy them nor give any encouragement to this kind of traffic. It may be said that this commerce encourages the Indians to make war on each other for the sake of selling the captures: but this is not the case. It is no more in the power of the traders to hinder them from going to war, than it is of the Governor of Michilimacinac, who does all in his power annually to prevent it: and as for the captives they are rather happy in the change than otherwise; for if the conquerors had no prospect of making

a profit by them, they would be all killed when taken; but by being conveyed to Canada they are taught the principles of religion, and become useful members of society.

That there are European traders settled among the Indians from the other side of the Continent is without a doubt. I myself have seen horses with Roman capitals burnt in their flanks with a hot iron. I likewise once saw a hanger with Spanish words engraved on the blade. Many other proofs have been obtained to convince us that the Spaniards on the opposite side of the Continent make their inland perigrinations as well as ourselves; but I have been told by one of these slave women, that it is not peltry they come principally in quest of.

Those Indians from whom the Peltries are obtained are known to us by the following names, *viz.*

The Ne-heth-aw-a Indians.

The Assinne-poetuc Indians.

The Fall Indians.

The Sussee Indians.

The Black-feet Indians.

The Paegan Indians.

The Blood Indians.

*Of the NE-HETH-AW-A Indians*²¹

This is the name they give to themselves, and their language. They are scattered over a very extensive country, for which reason they do not appear to be numerous, but were the different tribes to be collected, this nation would hold much greater influence among the others than they seem to do.—I am of opinion, that the Ochipawa Indians²², described by Carver²³, and

²¹Cree Indians.

²²Ojibway or Chippewa Indians.

²³Jonathan Carver, author of *Travels in the interior parts of America* (London, 1778).

inhabiting the countries to the south-eastward, sprung from the same original stock with Ne-heth-aw-as. The great affinity of their language seems to confirm this conjecture; for a person acquainted with the principles of one language, can without difficulty make himself understood to those who speak the other. These two nations have always been in strict alliance with each other, and many of the Ochipawas live in a promiscuous manner among the Ne-heth-aw-as, and upon very friendly terms with them, their country being infinitely superior to many of their northern neighbours, who inhabit a much colder track, and are poor in the extreme.

Of all the different nations in these parts, whom the Europeans have found out to vend their commodities to, the one under description is become the most familiar. Their country being the lowest down on the river I have mentioned before, they have been the longest acquainted with us, and consequently they are the most debauched, inveterate, and corrupted. For, as I have more than once observed, we have hitherto wofully experienced that the savage race have always acquired more bad qualities than good ones from their intercourse with Europeans. —This nation in particular become annually more difficult to deal with. Fraud, cunning, Indian finesse, and every concomitant vice, is practised by them, from the boy of twelve years of age, to the decrepid and infirm old man of four-score. Nothing is more applauded by them than successful speculation. Drunkenness and theft are distinguished accomplishments among all the nations; but this people stands foremost as the most degenerate.

It must, however, be understood, that the foregoing general outline of the Indian character relates more particularly to their over-reaching in trade; for where that is not concerned, you will find instances of honesty and fidelity among them which would do honour to a people governed by the wisest laws, and restrained from the commission of every enormity by the force of religion.

If the Savage commits murder, robbery, or any other crime

of an injurious nature, the pangs of a guilty conscience may probably upbraid him with the perpetration of the fact; yet he is so far from fearing corporal danger from that society whose peace he has disturbed, that he will range through the wilds of a pathless country, and seek a subsistence in whatever part he chooses, without fear of retaliation; for the country being extensive, he finds out a spot to live in unmolested, where the offended party cannot, or dare not, go in quest of him.

This instance of Savage liberty is just mentioned to exemplify to us that though the Indian is guilty of taking away the life of a fellow creature, though he glories in the commission of dexterous theft, and will without remorse exercise every injustice on his neighbour with impunity; yet, as he is not restrained by divine or human laws from these acts of outrage, nor does the idea of temporal and eternal punishment excite compunction in his mind, surely these enormities are not of so deep a dye as if committed by a man, whose mind is enlightened, and who is supposed to have a more just sense of the claims of society and the injunctions of religion.

As I cannot too deeply impress the idea, I must again repeat that the greatest pest ever sent into any country to render miserable its devoted inhabitants, never could exceed the destructive introduction of spirituous liquors among the Indians. Almost every imperfection of their natures, and every misery they undergo, may be traced up to this baneful fountain. It is, during the time of inebriation that the murderer lifts the bloody knife, or tomohawk, against the parent or friend; it is, during this temporary madness, that long-passed injuries and forgotten jealousies are recalled from oblivion; it is during this fatal intoxication, that orphans and widows are made friendless, and the only support of a large family laid low in an instant. Their unconquerable attachment to spirituous liquors keeps them in endless poverty; for to obtain it they even sell the miserable cloathing off their backs.

It is to be lamented that this evil seems rather to gain ground than otherwise; and can never be effectually remedied, but by the concurrence of the Traders conjointly. It would certainly be a laudable undertaking; and the advantages reverting to themselves from it would be manifold. Their property and servants would be more secure, the Indians by increasing in numbers would procure a greater quantity of skins, and the wars which usually subsist between the different Tribes, would be less frequent and bloody.

As a remarkable instance of the honesty and fidelity which is yearly experienced from these Indians, I mention the following.—The Hudson's Bay traders who take up goods into the interior parts, annually, have occasion to employ Indians, as well in carrying up the articles they barter with the natives, as in conveying down the furs purchased the preceding year.

An Indian with his wife will embark in his canoe four packs or pieces of sixty or seventy pounds each; which he takes down through rivers and lakes unfrequented, and known perhaps only to himself. In doing this it often happens that no other canoe is in company, and he consequently has the fairest opportunity possible of going off with the property committed to his care, which probably would enable him to live in affluence for years to come. Nor would there be any possibility of the owners discovering his retreat if he chooses to abscond. And yet, notwithstanding the temptation is so great, after a trial of fifteen years, it is a well-known fact, that not an instance has transpired of any embezzlement being made: on the contrary, the whole of these little cargoes are delivered up with as much punctuality, as if their future welfare depended on their honesty. The only reward for this singular service, which is a very considerable saving to the Company, is the value of six beaver skins, paid for each pack or piece, and the further gratification of a small quantity of English brandy; which they receive on their arrival at the settlement.

The Indians in the interior country are well made, and well featured; they are of a copper complexion, and few distorted or deformed objects are found among them. Their constitutions are naturally hale and disorders few. The Venereal disease is known to them, but the malady is not so virulent as in our hemisphere; and it is easily overcome with roots of their own discovery which they apply themselves. I have not yet heard of any dying of the disorder. They are more inclined to be of a lean habit of body than otherwise; a corpulent Indian is a much greater curiosity than a sober one. This may in a great measure be imputed to the wandering state of life they lead, which requires much action, and frequent change of situation.

They are very friendly to those who act with propriety towards them; especially when far distant from the Trading-houses. Every winter the servants of the Traders will be scattered all over the country among different bands, and come in to their employers in the spring, without the least violence being offered to their persons or effects.

An Indian's dress is composed of a pair of stockings made of leather, drest fine and pliable like shammy; a sort of loose jacket, with sleeves of the same kind; and over all he throws a drest Buffalo skin or a blanket. The hair of the young men is tied in different forms, and their faces sometimes painted according to their different fancies, but the men advanced in years, seldom paint their face, or tye their hair. The dress of the women differs not very materially from that of the men. When they can get cloth, they make a pair of short stockings of it, also a kind of close coat and sleeves of the same, with a blanket or Buffalo skin over all. Caps are very seldom worn either by male or female; but a drest Fisher or Otter skin is frequently put round the heads of the men, the major part of which hangs down the back.

The young men employ the greatest part of their time in the care of their horses, and in dress and play. The country

being so superabundantly supplied with animals for food, little of their time is required to procure it. In the summer season they either go to make war on their enemies, or stay at home in a state of ease and inaction.

In their war excursions, the old men, women and children stay behind in a place of safety; while the younger part of the tribe cautiously approach the confines of their enemy's country. During their approach they make no fires, for fear of their adversaries discovering the smoke; and they travel more in the night than in the day, that the darkness may favour their attack.

When the encampment of the enemy is discovered, they lie in ambush for the remainder of that day, and when they suppose all wrapt up in sleep, the slaughter is begun with a ferocity that Indian fury could alone inspire. Men, women and children all fall promiscuously to satiate the warrior's revenge, and compensate the loss of deceased friends; none are spared but young girls, who are taken captive and sold to the Canadian Traders, and become thereby more happy than their slaughtered parents had ever been.

Notwithstanding the warrior uses so much address to find his enemy unprepared, yet it sometimes happens that he is discovered, and a safe retreat becomes impracticable. In this dilemma both parties fight with great bravery, each side being provided with coats of mail, made of many folds of drest leather, which are impenetrable to the force of arrows: they have also shields, made of undrest Buffalo hides, which they shift about in the time of action with admirable dexterity and skill. If but one man is killed, the engagement is at an end, and the losing party betake themselves to flight, to lament their loss at leisure. Some campaigns are wholly employed in stealing horses, and in committing depredations on each other property; but the invader often pays with his life for his temerity.

Their horses are of great service to the Indians in these expeditions, and are much esteemed by them. Many of the men

shew more affection for their horses than for their wives. The horses bred are variously coloured, like our English horses, and about the size of those found in the north of Scotland and the Scottish isles. They were originally imported by the Spaniards on the western side of the Continent, and it is but lately that they have become common among the Nehethawa Indians. Many broils and animosities among the natives, originate from a desire of being in possession of these animals. One party generally commences hostilities by stealing the horses of their adversaries, and they in return retaliate; so that at length a mutual resentment takes place, and war becomes absolutely necessary.

The religious ideas entertained by the Indians of these parts, like those before described, appear to be very abstruse and confused. They seem to allow of a Supreme Being who dwells above, and whom they suppose to be the author of every blessing they enjoy. They do not however invoke him to protect them, for they say he is too good to cause them any harm. On the other hand, the evil spirit they admit of, is held by them in abhorrence and fear. They imagine that through his malevolence and contrivances, they are perpetually haunted by misfortunes; and they conceive, that he grudges them whatever they enjoy. They therefore will not partake of any thing they set a value on, without first throwing a part into the fire for the evil spirit. Many other superstitious ideas are very prevalent amongst them; but they are too simple to merit notice. The undulating motion of the Aurora Borealis, is supposed by them to be their departed friends, who are rejoicing in the regions of the blessed. From this idea they seem to have apprehensions of a future state.

The Nehethawa Indians, like the tribes before mentioned, measure numbers by decads, as one ten, two tens, three tens, &c. and 49 would be expressed by saying 4 tens and 9, or 5 tens wanting one.

They divide the year into thirteen moons, which are all

expressive of some remarkable event at the time. The first moon in the following list came in on the 12th of December 1784, and was called by them

Pou-arch-e-kin-e-shish.—It is so named from the wind blowing the brush from the pine tree.

Ke-sha-peshem—or the Old Moon.

Me-ke-su-a-peshem—or the Eagle Moon; from these birds appearing about this time.

Nis-cau-peshem—or the Goose Moon.

A-theck-a-peshem—or the Frog Moon; the frogs beginning to croak about this time.

O-pin-e-ou-wa-o-peshem—so called on account of birds laying their eggs about this time.

O-bas-ka-wa-ho-a-peshem — on account of young birds being fledged at this time.

O-pus-ko-a-peshem—on account of birds molting their feathers.

O-po-ho-a-peshem—on account of birds taking their flight about this time.

O-noch-a-ha-to-a-peshem—on account of all the animals of the deer kind rutting at this time.

O-poon-a-ha-to-a-peshem—on account of the rutting season being over.

Cus-cut-ta-no-a-peshem—on account of the rivers freezing at this time.

A-theck-a-peu-a-peshem—on account of the cold causing rime to adhere to the trees.

This Indian method of computing time is very palpably founded in error, and cannot be made to answer to our year, or twelve callender months, which bring round the year exactly. Whereas the Indian computation by moons falls short eleven days; consequently the moon which appeared on the 12th of December 1784, would appear about the first of that month in the following year, and so on, having annually a retrograde motion of eleven days. Whether it be to remedy this, or, what is

more probable, that they really think the year consists of thirteen lunations, certain it is, they thrust in another moon. They do not, however, agree among themselves, relative to the number of days each moon contains.

The language of these people is concise, smooth, and insinuating; and so copious, that by one word, they will express an idea, which would require three or four words to explain it, in the French or English tongues. A sufficiency is soon acquired to make oneself understood, but to speak it with a fluent propriety, requires time and attention.

Juglers and itinerant doctors are held in great reputation and reverence by the Indians, who impute to divine inspiration, the bungling performance of a few legerdemain tricks. It is not uncommon for these juglers to pretend to dive into the abyss of futurity; to foretel the success of a war expedition; and very gravely to point out the place where the enemy are to be found. These gentry are always possessed of more property than the others, every one making them presents for administering their medicines, which consist of a variety of powdered roots, &c. The bag in which the holy medicine is deposited, is held in particular veneration, and it would be an unpardonable sacrilege for any woman to touch it; for which reason the men in their journies bear themselves the sacred repository.

Some of these curious performers of deception will pretend to lay eggs, and swallow wooden pipe stems, as large as walking sticks. They will tell you very seriously, that they are able to make rum, tobacco, cloth, &c., but whenever we put their dexterity to the trial, we always discovered the deception. We took care always not to let them know that we had done so, for fear of lowering them in the esteem of their credulous followers, which would have been very mortifying to the ingenious performer.

It is now time to say something of the other nations in the list; but the account I have to give must be very concise, as we

are almost unacquainted with their customs constitutions, &c. Our knowledge of the Nehethawas, as I hinted before, being the most perfect, the preceding account is more particularly applied to that nation. The whole of the information I have been able to obtain in regard to the rest, is too superficial to induce me to attempt a minute description of them.

ASSINNEE POETUC²⁴

This nation is thus named by the preceding one, which signifies in their language, the Stone Indians. In the maps of North America, where the residence of these incognita is said to be, a nation of Indians is marked down, called the Assinneboils; and this is the name by which the Canadian French, still continue to call them. But it is a certain fact, that when the French possessed Canada, they never named any nation of Indians with propriety. The last described people they termed Crees; but their reason for doing so is only known to themselves, unless it was from the Ochipewas calling them Cristineaux; which may probably be the case.

The nation under description is a detached tribe from the Naudawissees²⁵ on the river Mississippi, mentioned in Carver's Travels, who anciently separated from the general stock, on account of some intestine commotion. At present these tribes are declared enemies to each other; yet their language, from the best information, has undergone no material alteration. The Assinee Poetuc are pretty numerous, and are scattered over a great extent of country. They bring many peltries to the traders, and are a principal support to the commerce. A large party of these Indians used to go down annually to York Fort on the coast of Hudson's Bay but since the Hudson's Bay and Canada

²⁴ Assiniboin Indians.

²⁵ Sioux Indians.

traders have penetrated so far inland, they are too well supplied with the things they want, on the spot, to perform a voyage so long, and attended with so many inconveniences. In those days, however, they were much better off than they are at present; as they, like too many other tribes, are degenerating daily, through the frequent use of spirituous liquors, and other debaucheries. These Indians have always been in strict alliance with the Nehethawas.

FALL INDIANS²⁶

This nation is thus named by us, and by the Nehethawa Indians, from their inhabiting a country on the Southern branch of the river, where the rapids are frequent. As they are not very numerous, and have a harsh, guttural language peculiar to themselves, I am induced to think they are a tribe that has detached itself from some distant nation, with which we are not as yet acquainted.

In this people another instance occurs of the impropriety with which the Canadian-French name the Indians. They call them *gros ventres*, or big-bellies; and that without any reason, as they are as comely and as well made as any tribe whatever; and are very far from being remarkable for their corpulency.

They seem not yet to be initiated into the manner of hunting beavers, dressing the skins, and killing the small peltries, for they bring nothing to us but wolves, which they take by a variety of contrivances.

Though we have interpreters for all the other Indian languages, none as yet have been able to attain a competency of this to make themselves understood; and the general method of conversing, is by speaking the Black-foot tongue, which is agreeable, and soon acquired.

²⁶These are evidently a branch of the Atsina or Blackfoot Indians. See *Handbook of the Indians of Canada*, published as an Appendix to the Tenth Report of the Geographic Board of Canada (Ottawa, 1913), pp. 51-52.

*The SUSEE INDIANS*²⁷

Though this nation have a language intirely to themselves, and which no others can learn, they are very few in number, being no more than a small tribe which has separated from the main body, and now harbour in some country about the Stony Mountain, where they keep to themselves, for not many have as yet appeared at any of the trading-houses. Those who occasionally visit us are a crafty deceiving set, much given to theft and intoxication. Though their tribe is small, they cannot live in amity with their neighbours; for the last summer a number of them fell upon an encampment of Blood Indians, whom they were at peace with, and most of the men being absent, they inhumanly butchered several women and children, which it was expected would be severely revenged the first opportunity.

These Indians are lazy and improvident; they bring us very few peltries, and those ill drest. Wolves skins are their chief commodity. Their women are the most ordinary of any I have seen, but they are all liberal of their favours, when a person has wherewithal to pay for them. They retain a close alliance with the Nehethawas, rather to profit by their protection, than for any mutual esteem, subsisting between them. Their language is equally disagreeable and difficult to learn; it rather resembles the confused cackling of hens, than the expression of human ideas; yet one of our interpreters has attained a sufficiency of it to answer the purpose of trading with them.

*The BLACK-FOOT, PAEGAN, and BLOOD INDIANS*²⁸

These Indians, though divided into the above three tribes, are all one nation, speak the same language, and abide by the same laws and customs. For what reason they are thus denom-

²⁷More commonly known as the Sarsi or Sarsee Indians.

²⁸The Siksika Indians. See *Handbook of the Indians of Canada*, pp. 426-428.

inated, I have not been able to discover, but they go by no other name among the Nehethawas. They are the most numerous and powerful nation we are acquainted with; and by living on the borders of the enemies country, are the principal barrier to prevent their incursions. War is more familiar to them than the other nations, and they are by far the most formidable to the common enemy of the whole. In their inroads into the enemies country, they frequently bring off a number of horses, which is their principal inducement in going to war.

These people are not so far enervated by the use of spirituous liquors, as to be slaves to it; when they come to trade they drink moderately, and buy themselves necessities for war, and domestic conveniences. They annually bring a good quantity of skins to the traders, but a greater number by far of wolves. All these tribes have a custom peculiar to themselves, which is the cutting off the joints of their fingers, beginning with the little finger, and taking off a joint as often as superstition prompts them. I have not been able to learn for certain the cause of this singular custom, nor did I ever observe any but the old men, that had their fingers thus mutilated.

They behave very friendly to those of our people who pass the winter with them, and none of them have as yet received any injury under their protection either in their persons or effects. The people of this nation will eat no kind of water-fowl, amphibious animal, or fish. Their chief subsistence is the flesh of buffaloes, the deer species, and likewise vegetables. Their language is not very grateful to the ear of a stranger, but when learnt, is both agreeable and expressive.

I have been at some pains to procure a specimen of the languages of the aforementioned nations, and have succeeded in all, except that of the Snake-Indians²⁹. The annexed table may perhaps be acceptable to those who are curious in that line. The

²⁹A name applied generally to the Shoshonean family of Indians, but especially to those in Eastern Oregon.

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exact orthography of the words, according to an Englishman's pronunciation, may be depended on, having received them with great care, from the mouths of the natives themselves.

It strikes me as a matter of no small curiosity to observe the multiplicity of genuine Indian languages to be met with in the western hemisphere; perhaps not half of them are mentioned in the given specimen. I know of other tribes to the south-eastward and northward of us, who speak other languages, but have not been able to obtain certain intelligence of them.

Before the fatal attack of the small pox, which broke out in the year 1781, all these nations of Indians were much more numerous than they are at present. By this dreadful visitation, which, as before observed, was general throughout the Indian country, it is computed that at least one half of the inhabitants were swept off by it.

*A brief ACCOUNT of the present STATE of the TRADE, carried
on among the aforesaid INDIANS*

Trade with the beforementioned Indians, is carried on by the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company, and also by several merchants from Canada. The extraordinary perseverance of the latter, through numberless difficulties, augmented by continual carrying-places, extensive lakes, and rapid rivers, have penetrated into this distant country in order to supplant the Hudson's Bay Company, who formerly divided very considerable profits from the exclusive monopoly of this lucrative branch of trade. At present these profits are considerably diminished; for while their expences are augmented in a ten-fold proportion, upon an average of former years, their imports of furs are considerably lessened, and their exports of sundry articles of merchandize are increased, they being obliged to trade upon a higher standard than heretofore, to keep pace with their opponents, who would otherwise outsell them.

In entering on this account it will be needful to repeat many circumstances that have already been noticed. But as the further elucidation of the subject requires it, I hope the apparent tautology will be excused.

Twenty years ago the Governor of York-Fort, which was the Company's principal establishment in the Bay, annually sent home at least thirty thousand skins, and maintained no more than twenty-five men, at very low wages; at present that place has upwards of one hundred men at it, who have increased salaries, and sends home no more than twenty thousand skins, upon an average, from itself and four subordinate settlements; and these are procured at an expence, which a few years back

would have been looked upon as next to an annihilation of their commercial existence.

It is an uncontrovertable fact, that since the French have evacuated Canada, the fur trade from the inland parts of Hudson's Bay, has been carried on to a greater extent than ever it was before; for the Company, who till then confined themselves to the sea-shore, knew nothing of the numerous nations inland; and these again knew as little of them: that the Company, notwithstanding they had obliged themselves by their charter to explore the whole of their territories, confined themselves within a small circle. They consequently did not exert their influence to procure peltries, or to augment the consumption of British manufactures, by any other methods than through the channel of a very few Indians, comparatively speaking. These Indians however, brought down enough to enrich a few individuals, whose interest it was to prevent too great an influx of furs, which would not only lower the price at market, but probably open the eyes of an injured commercial people. In the days I am alluding to, the port of York Fort was surrounded with nations of Indians entirely unknown to the traders of the Company; and they would have remained in the same state of ignorance to this day, had they not been awakened from their reveries by the unsurmountable perseverance of a few Canadian merchants, who found them out, through obstacles and impediments attended with more danger and personal hazard than a voyage to Japan.

Since that time their affairs have undergone a material change in these parts. The Canada merchants annually send into the interior country, for the Indian trade, about forty large canoes of about four tons burthen each, a considerable part of which goods are conveyed to those Indians who used to send their furs down to Hudson's Bay, by the Indian carriers, which did not amount to half the quantity at present procured. So that by this interference of the Canada traders, it is evident, that

many more peltries are procured and imported into England, and a greater quantity of its manufactures consumed than heretofore; and when it is further considered, that these goods are of a very inferior quality, which perhaps would hardly find a sale elsewhere, this extension of the trade will appear an object not very inconsiderable.

By the prosecution of this commerce from Canada, the Hudson's Bay Company found themselves effectually supplanted on the sea-shore, the natives being supplied inland with every conveniency for war and domestic uses. This induced the Company, in the year 1773, to begin their inland voyages³⁰, so that the Canadians from Canada and the Europeans from Hudson's Bay met together, not at all to the ulterior advantage of the natives, who by this means became degenerated and debauched, through the excessive use of spirituous liquors imported by these rivals in commerce.

It however must be owned, that the Hudson's Bay traders have ingratiated themselves more into the esteem and confidence of the natives than the Canadians. The advantage of trade is evidently on their side; their men, whose honesty is incorruptible, being more to be depended upon. In proportion to the goods imported, the Company export a greater quantity of furs, and these in better preservation, and consequently more valuable. Their unseasonable parsimony has hitherto been proved very favourable to their Canadian Opponents; as the accumulated expences attending so distant an undertaking would overbalance the profits of the latter, if the exertions of the Company were adequate to the value of the prize contended for.

The Hudson's Bay servants being thus more in possession of the esteem of the natives, they will always have the preference of trade as long as this conduct continues. Another great

³⁰It was in 1774 that Samuel Hearne built Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan; but servants of the Hudson's Bay Company, from Henry Kelsey onwards, had frequently visited the interior country before this.

advantage in their favour is, that the principal articles of their trading goods are of a superior quality to those imported from Canada. I would not by this insinuation infer, that the goods sent inland from Canada are not good enough for the Indian trade; no, I well know that the worst article imported is good enough; but while they have to contend with people who send goods of a superior kind, they evidently lie under a disadvantage, and it is my opinion, that it would be for the interest of the Canada merchants to supply goods of an equal if not superior quality to their adversaries, at every post where they have these formidable rivals to oppose them.

The great imprudence, and bad way of living of the Canadian traders have been an invincible bar to the emolument of their employers. Many of these people, who have been the greatest part of their lives on this inland service among savages, being devoid of every social and benevolent tie, are become slaves to every vice which can corrupt and debase the human mind; such as quarrelling, drunkenness, deception, &c. From a confirmed habit in bad courses of this nature, they are held in abhorrence and disgust, even by the Indians, who finding themselves frequently deceived by specious promises, never intended to be performed, imagine the whole fraternity to be impregnated with the same failing, and accordingly hold the generality of the Canadian traders in detestation and contempt.

On the contrary, the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company, imported principally from the Orkney Isles, are a close, prudent, quiet people, strictly faithful to their employers, and sordidly avaricious. When these people are scattered about the country in small parties among the Indians, the general tenor of their behaviour is conducted with so much propriety, as not only to make themselves esteemed by the natives, and to procure their protection, but they also employ their time in endeavouring to enrich themselves, and their principals, by their diligence and

unwearied assiduity. By this prudent demeanor among the Indians, notwithstanding they have annually exposed themselves to all the dangers incident to the trade, for fifteen years past, they have not sustained the loss of a man; and the principal advantage of the Company over the Canadian traders, is more to be attributed to the laudable efforts of their servants, than even to the superior quality of their goods.

While the Canadian servants are so far from being actuated by the same principles, that very few of them can be trusted with a small assortment of goods, to be laid out for their masters profit, but it is ten to one that he is defrauded of the whole by commerce with Indian women, or some other species of peculation. By this and various other means which lower them in the eyes of the natives, as before observed, they are become obnoxious to the Indians, their faith is not to be relied on, nor their honesty confided in; so that scarce a year elapses, without one or more of them falling victims to their own imprudence, at a time when fatal experience should teach them, that a conduct guided by caution and discretion ought to be the invariable and uniform rule of their behaviour.

It must be owned, that many of these people are possessed of abilities capable of aggrandizing their masters, and promoting their own welfare. They are very apt at learning the Indian languages, and acquiring a knowledge of the necessary Indian ceremonies, as well as customs to be observed in prosecuting the trade; but in the whole course of my observation, I have scarcely found one of them, who, for his abilities, honesty, integrity, and other necessary qualifications, could be intitled to the denomination of a good and faithful servant.

It cannot, however, be denied, but that they are excellent canoemen, and labour with surprizing dexterity, and inimitable patience, in their long inland voyages; and even when their provisions fail them, they bear their misfortunes with fortitude.

But at the same time it must not be admitted that they are the *only* people on the face of the earth, who are capable of performing these voyages and undergoing the fatigues of them. Though such may be the sentiments of their employers, let these gentlemen for a while look round them, and survey without prejudice the inhabitants of our own hemisphere, and they will find people who are brought up from their infancy to hardships, and inured to the inclemency of the weather from their earliest days; they will also find people, who might be trusted with thousands, and who are too much familiarized to labour and fatigue to repine under the pressure of calamity as long as their own and their masters benefit is in view. I will further be bold to say, that the present servants of the Hudson's Bay Company may be led as far inland as navigation is practicable, with more ease and satisfaction to the owners than the same number of Canadians. The former would be always honest, tractable, and obedient, as well from inclination, as from fear of losing their pecuniary expectations; whereas the latter being generally in debt, and having neither good name, integrity, nor property to lose, are always neglectful of the property committed to their charge, and whenever difficulties arise, there is never wanting some among them to impede the undertaking.

I have been led into the foregoing digression, from the frequent encomiums I have heard passed on the Canadians, as the only people for this business; but having had four years experience of the general tenor of their conduct, I thought myself entitled to give my sentiments on the subject, and to say something in regard to these *Messieurs Voyageurs*.

The Canadian merchants have formed themselves into a United Company³¹, and carry on a very extensive business over an unlimited extent of country, among Indians, who are hostile

³¹The North West Company. See W. S. Wallace (ed.), *Documents Relating to the North West Company* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1934).

and declared enemies to each other; and this branch of the Canada trade is by no means the least valuable appendage to that province. This Company alone, without counting those adventurers who trade in the parts which be adjacent to the Mississippi, &c. annually procure above one thousand packs of fine peltry, each weighing ninety pounds. They find employment for a great number of men under the denomination of guides, voyagers, clerks, interpreters, &c.; besides which, they give bread to a number of necessitous artists and labouring people about Montreal, who subsist principally by the continuation of this commerce.

In the year 1787 they obtained out of this river three hundred and three packs.

During this same year the Hudson's Bay traders had

twenty canoes of twelve packs each..... 240

And twenty Indian canoes carrying four packs each,

at seventy pounds 80

Which were equal to two hundred and forty-nine French.

So that if the Canada traders had the commerce of this river entirely to themselves, they would draw as much from it, as would be equal to one half of their present returns. The same year the Canada merchants transported into the same river six hundred pieces of goods about ninety pounds each; whereas the Hudson's Bay people sent no more than two hundred and forty pieces of about seventy pounds each; which plainly points out to us the great œconomy which is used on one side, and the enormous expenditure on the other.

It may be urged that the plan pursued by the Canada merchants, requires a great part of their goods for the use of the men. This appears an argument of consequence; yet to obviate it, we must consider, that the difference in the force of English brandy, and what is called high wines, will more than overballance the reduction advanced to the men; for a keg of

British spirits, when adulterated for service, will only make three kegs, whereas a keg of high wines when mixed for the Indian trade, will make five kegs; so that what it requires to mix thirty kegs for them, we with ours can have fifty kegs.

Since I have embarked in the Canadian employ I have frequently observed a profuse expenditure of goods made to Indians, for very frivolous ends, or more properly for no end at all; which to my certain knowledge is not practised in the other service. This practice is productive of nothing, but the corruption of the Indians, and the temporary flattering promises of those who receive them; for, as I have already observed, the advantages of trade annually preponderates on the side of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Those who feel the weight of this expensive undertaking, must certainly join with me in acknowledging, that a frugal œconomy is not only commendable, but necessary, in the expenditure of their property; perhaps had this plan been pursued, some of those gentlemen who still continue the business, might at this day enjoyed their ease and independence, by the fruits of a commerce, which has obtained for the Hudson's Bay Company the reputation of being one of the richest incorporated bodies in England.

The maxim of suffering the Canadian traders to run so deeply in debt, appears to be founded in error, and prejudicial to the affairs of their employers. These fellows, who are lost to every principle of moral rectitude, become loosened from all attachment to the service; they are intent on nothing but their own peculiar ease and convenience; they are careless of the property entrusted to them, unambitious in the performance of their duties, impatient of all order and decorum, disobedient to the instructions, and insulting to the persons, of those who employ them. They cannot be trusted in any trading party, for they will expend the goods they have with them on women

and trifles, imagining themselves out of the reach of all law; and there seems to be very few worthy of trust among them, but such as have wages in their employers hands.

My good wishes for the prosperity of the Canadian service is such, that I cannot help submitting with all due deference to superior abilities, the following expedients which occur to me, but which, most probably may never be put in execution.

To make the Company truly respectable, and at the same time to put in it their power to render the province of Canada of greater consideration to the mother country than it is, they should be legally admitted to the rights, immunities and privileges of a chartered Company; and if it were practicable, they should be united with the present Hudson's Bay Company, as we have seen an old and new East India Company united and incorporated in one joint body of merchants. And perhaps such a junction might not be unacceptable to the Hudson's Bay Company, who, for so many years, have tasted the sweets of monopoly.

I am fully persuaded that nothing is required but interest and proper application to bring about some plan of this nature. The magnitude of the object would justify the experiment; and I have no doubt but that many respectable persons would be found to patronize an adventure, which would put the proprietors in possession of a greater extent of territory than what is inhabited by all the Christian States in Europe.

I again repeat, that great improvements are to be made, and much wealth acquired from the seas about Hudson's Bay; and likewise that full as much remains to be done inland, but while affairs are carried on in those parts of the globe, upon the same footing they are at present, there is a probability that all these countries will remain as utterly unknown to the world, for ages to come, as the regions within the Polar Zones.

I am sufficiently aware of the interest, application, time, perseverance, and expense necessary to bring about a matter so

difficult and complicated in all its parts, as the important matter above hinted at; but a thing once begun is more than half completed; and it behoves those who are peculiarly concerned therein, and know the utility of the object, to make that beginning. No period, in my opinion, can be more favourable than the present. When so many fair provinces have been wrested from the mother country, on the same continent, it is our duty to point out every feasible method by which the parent state may cherish and bring to perfection the remainder.

JOURNAL of a JOURNEY from MONTREAL to NEW YORK,
in the year 1788

On the 14th of May, 1788, I left my wintering ground, where I had been about four years; on the 8th of July arrived at the Great Carrying-place on Lake Superior; on the 15th of September reached Montreal; and on the 25th of the same month I took my departure from that city to travel to New York.

September 25, 1788, I left Montreal, in company with a gentleman desirous of pursuing the same rout. About four in the afternoon we traversed over to La Prairie, a small village about two miles above Montreal.

26th, Hired a cart and two saddle horses, to proceed with our baggage towards St. John's, through a wretched country, the roads being very bad, and the land very unpromising. The town of St. John's, which is eighteen miles distant from La Prairie, makes a very formidable appearance. Here were to be seen a ship of eighteen guns, and another of twenty-two, with several other small craft, which were employed in Lake Champlain during the late war. A ship called the Washington, of 16 guns, also lies here, and which was taken from a part of the American army under the command of General Arnold³². The same day we took boat, and proceeded about five miles on the lake.

27th. The wind being unfavourable, we went but fifteen miles, and then made for the shore, and put up at the house of a Mr. Barran, a serjeant in the 44th regiment. His house was very prettily fitted up in the English stile, and is by much the neatest I have seen among the country settlers.

³²Benedict Arnold. See *Dictionary of American Biography*.

28th. Left the house of our very hospitable landlord, but the wind being still contrary, we did not proceed above six miles.

29th. The wind becoming favourable, we made a good stretch in the Lake untill twelve at night, which brought us to Ticonderoga. We had passed by Crown Point in the night.

30th. From Ticonderoga we proceeded about thirty miles farther to Skeensborough, the estate of General Skeene³³, which he was obliged to abandon on account of his adherence to the royal cause. Here a saw-mill and four houses are erected.

Lake Champlain is about one hundred and fifty miles in length from St. John's to Skeensborough. Its direction is about N.W. and S.E. and it is seldom two miles wide, except at the widest part, the middle of it, which is computed to be twenty miles over. About twenty-eight miles from St. John's is the extent of the British territories in this quarter; all the remainder of the lake belongs to the United States. At fourteen miles from St. John's is Isle au Noix, a small island, very well adapted to command the channel of the lake, but it is at present in a ruinous state. It still however retains a small garrison, part of the 60th regiment, for the sake of regulating the trade between Canada and the United States. Exclusive of this garrison, there is a brig, mounting eight carriage guns, stationed within the American lines for the same purpose.

As we passed Crown Point in the night I can say nothing of that ancient French fortress. Ticonderoga is a rocky point, and by its situation effectually commands the passage of the lake. It appears to have once been a place of considerable strength, but it is at this time much neglected.

Immediately opposite is Mount Independence; a lofty point, where some fortifications have formerly been erected. Between these two forts the Americans built a temporary bridge to impede

³³Philip Skene, a loyalist officer who served with General Burgoyne. See *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. xviii. The name Skenesborough was changed to Whitehall in 1788.

the passage of the King's troops from Canada; but the forts being evacuated on the approach of the troops, the bridge was sawn very leisurely in pieces.

A traveller in passing thro' lake Champlain, is rather distressed, when he lands, with the variety of currency in the country; for on the Canada end of the lake the dollar is valued at five shillings; on the North side, which is in the state of New York, it is reckoned at eight shillings; and on the south side, which is in the state of Vermont, at six shillings.

October 1. Agreed with a Mr. M'Kinly, for the use of his waggon from hence to Albany, being seventy four miles, for eight dollars. We went from Skeensborough to Fort Ann, through the woods, on horse-back, a tract of twelve miles, where we found our waggon; and proceeded the same day to Fort Edward, twelve miles farther, through a very good road.

2d. Continued our route, and put up at Still Water. Had there good accommodations, and a civil, agreeable landlady.

3d. About nine in the morning we arrived at Albany, through a most agreeable country. From Skeensborough to Fort Ann, the road is exceeding bad, and leads through a tract very little cultivated. The peasants are very intelligent and improve their farms with apparent industry. The land produces in great abundance Indian corn, potatoes, water melons, pumkins, &c. and the finest timber I ever beheld. As we advanced towards Albany the roads became better, the ground more cultivated, and the buildings made a more respectable appearance.

From Fort Edward towards Still Water the appearance of everything strikes the eye of a stranger with pleasure, as he beholds a beautiful country under the hand of improvement; a Briton, however, in passing, cannot but sympathize with the unfortunate General Burgoyne, and his brave followers, who unhappily became captives at Saratoga.

At Still Water we saw a regiment of American militia manœuvring, to the apparent satisfaction of their officers, but

in our opinion they cut a sorry appearance indeed! Their guns were old and rusty, and the clothing of this motly troop, consisted of every shape and colour, that was ever known or invented. Some wore cocked hats, some flapped hats, and some no hats at all. The major part of them, being just taken from the plough, stooped down as though they were admiring their shoe-strings. Some were clad in waistcoats without sleeves; but by much the greater part of them had their carcasses inclosed in horseman's coats, similar to those worn by Hackney-coachmen.

We passed the house and mills of General Scuyler³⁴. They have been lately rebuilt, having formerly been destroyed by General Burgoyne's army. The water of Hudson's river was very low, and we crossed it four times in our waggon, between Albany and the New City. Albany is computed to contain five hundred houses, mostly of brick, some of which are tolerably well built. The greater part of the inhabitants are low Dutch. It has an English church, a presbyterian meeting house, and another for the Dutch. It is but a solitary place, and the people do not seem to be very sociable. At the time I was there, no hard money was to be got; and paper money suffers a discount of eight per cent. all over the province.

October 4. We left Albany and embarked on board a sloop consigned to New York, but had not continued the voyage above three miles, before the vessel got aground on the shoals, where we remained four days in much distress, striving every tide to disengage ourselves without effect.

7th. We left the vessel, and embarked on board another, called the *Arabia*, — Wyncoop, master.

8th. We this day passed the new Town of Hudson, about thirty miles below Albany. This town is a standing monument of human industry, being entirely built since the conclusion of the war. It is beautifully situated on an elevated situation, has many

³⁴Philip Schuyler. See *Dictionary of American Biography*.

excellent buildings, and bids fair to rival Albany for trade, in a few years; particularly on account of its being situated below the shoals. It cannot contain less than two hundred houses, the first stone of which was laid in 1784.

A very excellent floating machine is erected for the purpose of drawing up the sand from the bed of the river, but the contractor for the job has made very little progress, notwithstanding it is two years since the commencement of the undertaking.

The famous Hudson's river, which we find so much extolled in descriptions of this country, appears to me not to merit the praise given of it. The distance from New York to Albany is one hundred and sixty miles, and no farther is this river navigable for vessels of any burthen; and even in this distance, vessels drawing eight foot water meet with much difficulty in certain places.

8th. and 9th. We had light airs, which prevented us from making much way. The country is all along beautifully settled, and makes a pretty appearance from the water. Chestnuts, walnuts, and apples, are so plenty, that travellers help themselves *en passant* without ceremony. Cyder is the usual drink among the country people, but I cannot say much in its commendation. The peasantry, as I remarked before, are hospitable, intelligent, and inquisitive, but are rather griping on travellers, particularly the low Dutch.

10th. This day we had a fine breeze of wind which soon conveyed us to the city of New York; a place too well known to require any description here.

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